



Illumination Project Community Conversations

Colorado Springs Police Department
and
Colorado Springs Leadership Institute

Project Overview

The core values of the Illumination Project is to promote citizen involvement and to identify ways for the police department and the community to work together to improve the quality of life in Colorado Springs.

Project Overview

In 2017, the Colorado Springs Police Department (CSPD) partnered with the Center for Creative Leadership to develop a program termed the Illumination Project. Using a similar program developed in the wake of a racially motivated shooting in Charleston, South Carolina as a template, the Illumination Project sought to enhance the relationship the CSPD has with the Colorado Springs community.

In early 2018, both organizations began working with various community groups to host listening sessions aimed at establishing a platform for meaningful communication, for the purpose of discussing topics of mutual importance.

Project Overview

As part of the program's design, the program was developed with the intent of transitioning it to another community-based leadership group once the program was fully supported. This plan resulted in the Colorado Springs Leadership Institute (CSLI) being incorporated into the program's design.

In March 2021, the police department and CSLI partnered to continue developing relationships between the department and the community. This partnership resulted in a re-branding of the community interactions, now called community conversations.

Meadows Park Community Center

July 14, 2021

Meadows Park Community Center

On July 14, 2021, the Meadows Park Community Center, located in southwest Colorado Springs, hosted the program's first community conversation.

The community and police department participants discussed a number of topics, to include:

- Non-law enforcement interactions between officers and youth
- Positive law enforcement interactions with the community
- Mental health awareness

The groups also discussed and learned of several programs the police department has developed/fostered to enhance its relationship with the community.

Non-law
Enforcement
Interactions
between Officers
and Youth

Non-Law Enforcement Interactions between Officers and Youth

In 2019, the police department partnered with Big Brothers Big Sisters to launch *Bigs with Badges*. This program not only sought to improve relationships between law enforcement and the community but also to allow officers the opportunity to have a positive impact on the lives of the program's youth, some of whom come from high-risk environments.

On a monthly basis officers from throughout the department volunteer their time to mentor youth in a one-on-one setting at events arranged by and under the guidance of representatives from Big Brothers Big Sisters. These events typically include trips to area attractions or participation in a variety of sporting events.

In addition to their official service to the community, many officers volunteer their time by serving a variety of community groups and at community events, to include Bigs with Badges.



Positive Law Enforcement Interactions with the Community

Positive Law Enforcement Interactions with the Community

In June 2021, the department developed a new program called *Play COS*, which sought to create opportunities for officers to have positive interactions with the community.

Using donations, patrol officers have been equipped with different types of sports balls (e.g., footballs, soccer balls, basketballs) that they keep in their police vehicles. During the course of their day and in between calls for service, officers are encouraged to share the sports balls with members of the community they encounter. The officers are also encouraged to take a few minutes out of their busy day to interact with the community by playing catch, shooting hoops, or passing a ball.

Since the program's inception, officers have handed out hundreds of sports balls and developed countless positive relationships with members of the community.



Mental Health Awareness

Mental Health Awareness

In 2013, the CSPD began working with representatives from the Colorado Springs Fire Department (CSFD) and Aspen Pointe Mental Health (currently known as Diversus Health) to proactively provide mental health resources to members of the community. The plight of this partnership was to streamline access to mental health resources, while at the same time minimizing the draw on resources ill-fitted to address an individual's mental health needs; specifically, emergency room medical staff and the criminal justice system.

With a team comprised of an officer (from the CSPD), a mental health clinician (from Diversus Health), and a medical professional (from the CSFD), the Community Response Team (CRT) began responding to mental health calls for service in January 2014. Since its inception, the unit has been expanded to include four fully staffed teams that provide seven day a week coverage. On an annual basis, the teams respond to thousands of calls for service involving members of the community who are experiencing a variety of mental health issues.

In addition to streamlining access to mental health services, each of the team's members are afforded the opportunity to focus on their area of expertise to provide a comprehensive level of service to those in need.