

Recognizing the Best in County Government Programs!



2014 Achievement Awards

Call for Entries



2014 VACo Achievement Awards

Deadline: June 2, 2014

Application Form

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 2, 2014.**

Program Information

Locality Prince William County Police Department

Program Title Operation Blue Dragon - Narcotics Unit

Program Category Criminal Justice & Public Safety

Contact Information

Name Tara Van Horn

Title First Sergeant, Assistant to the Chief

Department Prince William County Police Department

Complete Mailing Address _____
1 County Complex, Prince William VA 22191

Telephone # 703-792-6713 Fax # 703-792-7056

E-mail tvanhorn@pwccgov.org

Signature of county administrator or chief administrative officer

Name Stephan M. Hudson

Title Chief of Police

Signature _____

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephan M. Hudson", is written over a horizontal line.

2014 VACo Achievement Award
Prince William County Police Department Narcotics Unit
Nomination Narrative

In July of 2013, a growing drug trend was identified in Prince William County. The intelligence indicated wide spread abuse of prescription medication and the strongly related surge in Heroin availability and use. This problem was beginning to manifest itself in overdoses, an increase in patrol related Heroin and pill arrests and an increase in prescription fraud and Heroin cases being developed in the Special Investigations Bureau. National media outlets were chronicling similar stories of communities that had been overrun with diverted prescription medication and Heroin abuse. There were grim statistics related to overdose deaths and sad stories of families ripped apart by addiction being reported in communities across the nation. The Prince William County, Manassas and Manassas Park Narcotics Task Force and the Prince William County Special Investigations Bureau joined in a collaborative effort to impact this growing trend in our own communities.

Lieutenant Dan Hess, First Sergeants Matthew McCauley and Dan Murphy, Sergeants Eric Garza and Kenneth Hulsey and Detectives Caillen Smith and David Ehrhardt met to formulate a plan of action. A plan was conceived and implemented soon after. The plan consisted of three components to address the problem. It was named Operation Blue Dragon. The Blue represented the common color of prescription pills and Dragon is a street name for Heroin.

The First component was the enforcement effort. This would involve identifying targets selling prescription drugs and Heroin and developing criminal cases against them through undercover operations. This was a very complex undertaking as it required every detective to run individual cases on as many targets as could be identified while coordinating toward a mass round up. Detectives Caillen Smith and David Ehrhardt were designated as the lead case agents responsible for all of the coordination. We also had a full time intelligence analyst, Alicia Larkins, assigned to help keep track of the large amount of intelligence and case information that came streaming in. Detective Wayne Smith handled the money laundering and suspect background workups for the operation. There were a couple of early cases in July of 2013 with the bulk of the enforcement effort occurring in a very compressed operational window from August to November of 2013.

The second component of the operation was public awareness and education. A large aspect of this was allowing members of a major news outlet to have unprecedented access to the information we had on the growing problem and a firsthand look at our enforcement efforts. This also allowed for the drug trend concerns and enforcement efforts to get to as large an audience as possible. Reporters from the Washington Post produced an article and video report of the operation. A second aspect of the awareness and education component was to conduct informational talks directed at administrators and security in schools in Prince William County, Manassas and Manassas Park. These classes are ongoing and critical to informing frontline educators about the availability and use of prescription drugs and Heroin amongst teens.

Page Two

RE: PWCPD Narcotics Unit Nomination Narrative

The third component of the operation was prevention and addiction support. We recognized that opiate addiction is a profound issue. Without intervention, treatment and support most of the people we would arrest would return to using drugs. To this end we provided every arrestee an information sheet with information on local and national points of contact to help them seek treatment if they wanted to.

On November 12, 2013 the operation concluded with the arrest of most of the 46 total targets. In addition units executed seven search warrants in Prince William County, Manassas and Manassas Park. Evidence recovered that day included pills, Heroin, money, nine guns and a vehicle was seized. This was in addition to the hundreds of doses that were taken off the street through the undercover operations. The media coverage of the operation was massive and in the few weeks following the arrest undercover operations were difficult to conduct as every drug dealer we tried to deal with was noting concern due to Operation Blue Dragon. The intangible successes such as suppression are difficult to quantify but ultimately the long hours and difficult undercover operations were an investigative success. The continuing awareness classes and compassionate approach to the realities of addiction will continue to bear fruit into the future.

In addition to those named above the following Detectives were actively involved in cases, undercover operations and follow up work related to Operation Blue Dragon. Detectives Serena Bowers (Manassas City PD), Joseph Shifflett (Manassas City PD), Aaron Whetsell (Manassas Park PD), Donna Edelen (PWCPD), Alexander McMillan (PWCPD), Garry Mendoza (PWCPD), Kevin Morin (PWCPD), Joshua Pafford (PWCPD), KatyBeth Strobel (PWCPD), Patrick Buchanan (PWCPD), Stephen Cieslinski (PWCPD), Donald DeShazo (PWCPD), Dimas Fragosa (PWCPD), Michael Jordan (PWCPD), Joshua Lane (PWCPD), Katherine Lewis (PWCPD), Bryan Sutton (PWCPD), Joshua Wehmeyer (PWCPD) and Sergeant Bart Stromer (PWCPD) Sergeant Jimmy Horton (Manassas City PD).

Washington Post Video:

http://www.washingtonpost.com/posttv/video/thefold/blue-dragon-flushes-out-drug-dealers-in-va/2013/11/13/8114010c-4ce0-11e3-9890-a1e0997fb0c0_video.html