



## The Greater St. Cloud Public Safety Foundation

March 2021

In 2014, Officer Dan McClure, a member of the St. Cloud Minnesota Police Department, was inspired by a community policing project in his hometown of Racine, WI. In 1996, the City of Racine Police Department embraced the idea of community policing. Rather than saturating a high crime area with officers reacting to incidents, they took a new approach, which was to locate a police department outpost in the heart of a troubled neighborhood. The purpose of the community-based outpost was, and continues to be, to provide long-term stabilization to the neighborhood by building relationships with members of the community, improving the quality of life in the neighborhood, reducing crime, and empowering citizens to be personally engaged in their community.

Officer McClure recognized that such an outpost could enable the St. Cloud Police Department to improve community policing in troubled St. Cloud neighborhoods. He shared the concept with his superiors and ultimately, with Chief Blair Anderson. Chief Anderson took interest in the concept and led a group of police department personnel on a trip to Racine to learn about that project. Inspired by what they learned, the group returned to St. Cloud and discussed how a community outpost could work in St. Cloud. Chief Anderson proposed a concept to St. Cloud Mayor Dave Kleis, who gave his approval to the department to proceed with the foundational planning needed for the project.

To support the project financially, a non-profit entity, the Greater St. Cloud Public Safety Foundation (GSCPSF), was established. The purpose of the foundation was to raise the funds needed to construct, and ultimately own, the physical building where an outpost was to be located.

The GSCPSF obtained non-profit tax status (501c3) and developed a business plan. During this process it was decided that the foundation's mission was to be broader than the physical police outpost alone and would include support for all public safety providers in a three-county area (i.e., Benton, Sherburne and Stearns), including police, fire and emergency medical personnel. The mission of the GSCPSF was identified: To be the leading advocate of public safety in the greater St. Cloud region.

Two local foundations, the Initiative Foundation and the Central Minnesota Community Foundation, provided initial funding to cover start-up costs of the GSCPSF. A governance board was established with community volunteers, who set about raising funds needed for the COP House. The first lead matching gift was \$75,000 from the St. Cloud Rotary Club. This was leveraged to raise in-kind and cash donations totaling nearly \$500,000, which were used to purchase the selected property and build the neighborhood facility. Of note, the St. Cloud Rotary Club contributed a total of \$125,000 to the project. The COP House was completed,

staffed and functioning in August 2017. In addition to providing community policing at the COP House, the Stearns County departments of Public Health and Social Services lease space and provide services in the facility, as does CentraCare and Mayo Clinic Ambulance.

Currently, the police personnel who staff the COP House provide the foundation board monthly updates on activities taking place and services provided at the outpost. Partners include St. Cloud State University Criminal Justice Program, Arrive Ministry, Career Solutions, CentraCare, St. Cloud School District, Whitney Center, MN Legal Aid, Stearns County Human Services, The YES Network, Girl Scout Troop 114, St. Cloud Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program, Center for Victims of Torture, Children's Dental Unit, Blue Cross MN, Stearns County Community Corrections, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) Group, Stearns County Public Health Nurse, and Hands Across the World.

For reference, attached is a Community Outpost Report on activities in January and February 2020. It provides compelling examples of the vibrant and essential role the COP House has in its neighborhood.

Of special note, the St. Cloud Police Department and the Greater St. Cloud Public Safety Foundation received the 2018 L. Anthony Sutin Civic Imagination Award from the US Department of Justice for their partnership to help turn a vacant building in a troubled neighborhood into a hub of health and activity.

In addition to establishing the COP House and supporting its community policing programming, the GSCPSF board of directors identified three additional initiatives for the foundation:

- 1) The Greater St. Cloud Public Safety Foundation's Scholarship Fund was started in 2016 with the intention of awarding scholarships to young people who want to pursue careers in public safety fields (law enforcement, fire, and emergency medical services). This fund was formed to help address the declining numbers of applicants pursuing careers in these critical positions within our community, and assist our local jurisdiction in recruiting a talented workforce that represents the diversity and makeup of our three-county community. To date, 14 scholarships have been awarded.
- 2) The Tri-County School Safety Pilot Project is a collaboration between the Greater St. Cloud Public Safety Foundation, St. Cloud private company GeoComm, our local school districts, and our county 9-1-1 emergency dispatch centers. The project's goal is to provide better situational awareness and improved response time to school crisis incidents.
- 3) An annual wellbeing conference to support both volunteer and career first responders in the tri-county region. The purpose is to provide information and resources to support the mental and physical wellbeing of those serving in extremely high-stress roles, and their families.

Additionally, during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 and 2021, the GSCPSF committed to provide \$30,000 in funding for personal protective equipment (PPE) for first responders in conjunction with CentraCare and regional police, fire and EMT agencies.

The GSCPSF has seen tremendous success in a short time. All initiatives have been advanced and continue to serve the three-county community as intended. A volunteer board of community members provides governance of and leadership to the foundation. Executive administration at 20 hours per week is provided through a contracted resource.

In 2021 the board of directors will participate in strategic planning to review accomplishments to date and determine areas of focus for the next five years. The GSCPSF has established great momentum in responding to the needs of our communities – and much need remains. Locally, the success of the Community Outpost has generated interest in a second Outpost in another location within our community. The Outpost programming for children and adults has garnered state and national attention – and partnerships – because of its innovation and effectiveness.

Of particular importance is the need to identify sustainable sources of funding that will support the foundation's current and future needs. To secure the financial resources needed to carry out a new five-year plan, a multi-faceted development strategy is being crafted. For the development strategy to grow with the goals of the foundation, a donor management and fundraising software tool (i.e., CRM) is needed. The GSCPSF is seeking a donor who is like-minded in support of public safety innovation and success in our greater St. Cloud region, to fund the software tool.

Since 2015, much has been accomplished in the foundation's work to develop and support effective community policing. Recent local, state-wide, national and global events have put a spotlight on the importance of community policing to the wellbeing of all citizens, first responders and our communities. Thus, our work continues.