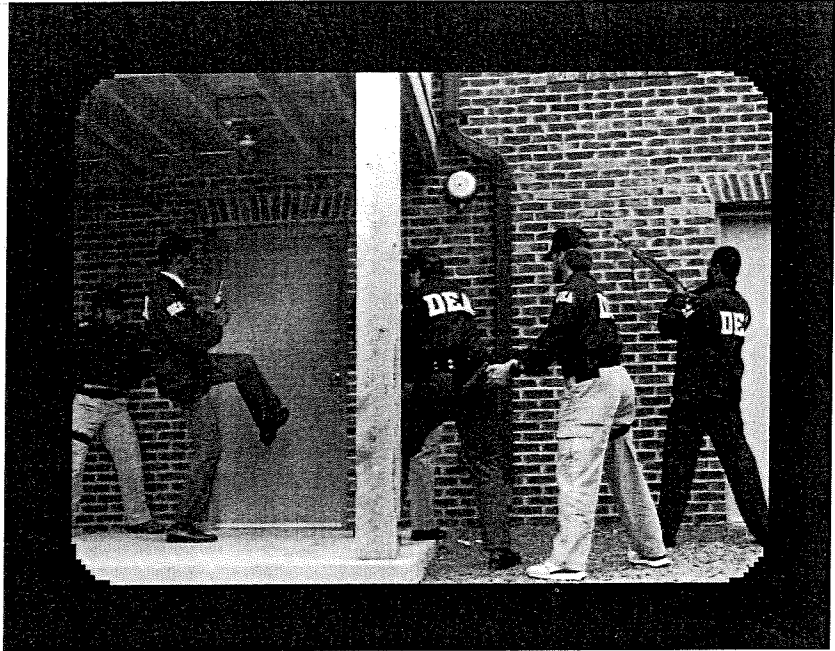


Chapter 17

Stopping Crime Where You Live

Drug dealers were using an empty apartment building near a highway. Drug users would drive into this area to buy drugs and drive away. For three years, the police kept arresting the dealers. Drugs always bring serious crime to a community. There were many murders in the area and so many calls for help that the police did not have enough officers to send. Finally, the people in the community formed an action group.



CHECK vocabulary words in bold.
LOOK UP word meanings in the glossary beginning on page 92.

They called a meeting of the police, city government officials, community leaders, the health department, the public works department, the housing department, and lawyers. Together, this group came up with a plan to rid the neighborhood of drugs and drug dealers. The plan was successful, and the neighborhood became a safe one for families. In this chapter, you will learn about the causes of crime. You will also learn about the many ways citizens and police can work together as a team to stop crime.

Citizen Patrols

The police departments of some major cities have neighborhood people who patrol and guard their area against crime. They are called citizen foot patrols. They are police trained, carry phones, and wear special jackets. They can call the police if they see trouble but, often, do not carry guns.

How much have citizen patrols helped? Property crimes have dropped by 44 percent in Portland, Oregon, where there is an active foot patrol. This means that people are stealing less because they know they have a good chance of getting caught. Also, not one single person has been hurt while on patrol in Portland!

The Causes of Crime

Many people believe that **poverty** and unemployment cause many crimes. People who do not have money often live in crowded places where rent is lower. People living in crowded places get in each other's way. They argue and fight more, so there is more chance for violence.

CRITICAL THINKING

What do you think is the cause of crime? Do you think there is more than one cause? Explain.



Former gang member Pedro says: "I heard fellow gang members say they expect to be killed with all the shooting they do. It is true: the only direction a gang takes you in is toward jail or toward the cemetery. That's

because gangs set out to abuse society, and that is a loser. I was beating up on other black and Puerto Rican kids when I should have been working with them to fight prejudice. It is just plain wrong to hurt other human beings, no matter what their color is."

For example, when the number of jobs goes down, the murder rate goes up. This is also because people who do not have jobs have more time to get in trouble. They may then start to sell drugs or steal to get money to live. It is easy for the crimes they commit to become more and more serious. The sad mistake many people make is that they do not make other choices to change their unhappy situation.

Sometimes, people who have lots of money commit crimes. For example, white-collar criminals can steal very large amounts of money from businesses.

Many people believe that violence on TV, in the movies, and in rock music helps cause crime. They are right. If people see and hear so much violence, they will begin to think that violence is the way to handle problems. Of course, violence is never the way to solve problems. This is the most important message that people do not learn from the media. Violence may seem normal on TV, but violence is never normal.

Society has changed. Families do not always teach young people about what is right and what is wrong. Many families have a hard time living on little money. There may be only one parent to take care of everybody's needs, or the parents may be young. Teen parents often are not able to get a good job or to make wise decisions about life. They also have a hard time being responsible.

Such families can have a lot of violence. Problems do not get solved and anger builds. Society needs to help these families by working together. Programs that provide jobs and counseling help make families stronger. Strong families mean less crime.

Working Together

How can working together stop crime? Many young people get in trouble because they are bored and have nothing to do after school. They may also get in trouble because they are not in school during the day. Being both unhappy and bored is a dangerous mix.

When one community found that many of its young people had been suspended from school, it started a special program for these dropouts. As a result, the daytime or schooltime burglary rate went down. Many cities have after-school programs with activities to keep young people busy, interested in projects, and off the street. If young people are off the street, they do not have to spend time with those who are a bad influence and who will get them into trouble.

Mediation

How can crime among people who know each other be stopped? Many crimes are committed by people who know each other. Often, the victim may not want to bring charges against the suspect. The victim may think that the suspect should have another chance. The victim may be afraid of the suspect. This is where **mediation** can help.

What is mediation? The victim brings charges. If the victim brings charges in court, the court decides whether or not the case is one that can



CRITICAL THINKING

Most gang members come from families and neighborhoods where money is scarce. Yet, most people who are unhappy or who do not have much money never become involved in crime. What are some of the ways to create a better life within the law in today's world?

DID YOU KNOW? For thousands of years, Mohawk

Indians have used mediation even for crimes of murder. Three things are important in Mohawk mediation: 1) the defendant has to understand what is wrong and agree to change; 2) both sides have to agree at the ideas talked about to solve the situation are OK; and 3) the defendant has to do something to make up for the harm caused the victim or the loss of the family and friends of the victim.

EYE OPENER

Youth gangs have become an all-too-common part of city life, from Los Angeles to New York. In Los Angeles, gangs have more than 70,000 members in 600 gangs. This is according to Keith E. Greenberg in his book, *Out of the Gang*.

1. What do drugs always bring to a community? _____
2. What did the community form? _____
3. What plan did they come up with? _____
4. What did the neighborhood become? _____
5. What will you learn in this chapter? _____
6. In some major cities what do neighborhood people do? _____

7. What are they called? _____
8. Why are people stealing less? _____
9. How many people have been hurt while on patrol in Portland? _____
10. What do many people believe causes crime? _____
11. What happens when the number of jobs goes down? _____
12. What is the sad mistake many people make? _____

13. What do many people believe helps cause crime? _____
14. How does violence seem on TV? _____
15. What are teen parents not often able to do? _____
16. What makes families stronger? _____
17. Strong families mean what? _____
18. What is a dangerous mix? _____
19. What can happen when young people are off the street? _____

20. Many crimes are committed by people who what? _____

Critical Thinking

(pages: 82 & 83)

1. What do you think is the major cause of crime in Columbia?
2. Is there more than one cause? Explain.
3. What needs to happen to break or end the cycle of violence and revenge?
4. Can outside people (those not living in the neighborhood help? How?

5. Do we have to accept the idea that people are going to use drugs and the violence that goes with them? Why?

6. Generations of people are being destroyed by drug use. If there were more jobs available, would this help?

7. Do you think this destruction and violence surrounding drug use will end or continue throughout your and your children's lifetimes?