

# Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem Oriented Policing



Kansas City, Missouri Police Department  
Central Patrol Division  
Day Labor Center



**Richard D. Easley**  
Chief of Police

**Chief's Office**

1125 Locust Street  
Kansas City, Missouri 64106

Office (816) 234-5010  
Fax (816) 234-5013

June 3, 2004

Herman Goldstein Award Selection Committee  
School of Criminal Justice  
Rutgers University - Newark  
123 Washington Street  
Newark, NJ 07102-3

Re: Herman Goldstein Award - Submission  
Westside CAN Center - Day Laborer Program

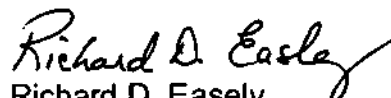
Dear Committee Members,

Please accept for consideration of The 2004 Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing the enclosed submission by the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department for the Westside CAN Center- Day Laborer Program.

The explosive growth in Kansas City's Hispanic immigrant community and particularly, the migrant day laborer population posed unique challenges to the Westside neighborhood of Kansas City. Traditional policing methodologies were ineffective.

We believe that the Westside CAN Center-Day Laborer Program exemplifies innovative and effective problem oriented policing. The Kansas City, Missouri Police Department attests to the methodology used in accordance to SARA and is able to verify that the results of this project are accurate and directly attributed to the project submitted for consideration.

Sincerely,

  
Richard D. Easley  
Chief of Police

Kansas City, Missouri Police Department  
Westside **CAN** Center - **Day Laborer** Project  
Summary

**SCANNING:** The problem was the daily congregation of documented and undocumented Hispanic male immigrants near the intersection of Southwest Boulevard and Summit Street in Kansas City Missouri's Westside neighborhood, which caused an increase in criminal activity and disorder. The residents and business owners felt powerless to do anything about it.

**ANALYSIS** The analysis of this problem had two main components police observations and citizen involvement and observation. All past police efforts to solve the problem had failed.

With the absence of hard data or statistics, the officers relied on informational meetings with businessmen and community leaders, attended community meetings, and reviewed the limited available crime statistics. The officers patrolled the neighborhood on foot when possible, often stopping to chat with residents and business owners in order to communicate and form positive relationships while gathering information relating to crime.

Traditional law enforcement methods did not work well for several reasons. Few men carried identification and most were non-English speaking. Jail did not affect the behavior of the most flagrant offenders of city ordinances.

If KCPD enacted "zero-tolerance", the neighborhood and Latino leadership felt KCPD was targeting Hispanics and the Latino community. They interpreted these actions as civil liberties-civil rights issues. If KCPD took a more laissez-faire approach, the community then believed the police department was ignoring them and did not take their problems seriously.

Initially it was assumed by law enforcement that the problems were caused solely by the undocumented workers. After research it was determined that the problems were caused by local residents, documented and undocumented persons.

**RESPONSE:** - The response to this problem gradually transitioned from traditional police techniques to community based policing. Through strategic partnerships with businesses, residents and agencies a new day labor site and WCAN Center was constructed.

**ASSESSMENT** -With the opening of the new day labor site and WCAN Center crime statistics show a remarkable decrease in criminal activity. The neighborhood residents have initiated relationships with the officers, unprecedented in the history between the Hispanic community and the police department in Kansas City. The day laborers themselves have assumed self-policing activities. They have assumed the responsibility of maintaining the WCAN Center and enforcing codes of behavior at the Center and in and around the neighborhood. The residents are assisting the WCAN Center and the police officers in maintaining the day labor center.

# Westside Community Action Network Day Laborer Program

KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI POLICE DEPARTMENT

## **Scanning**

The problem was the daily congregation of documented and undocumented Hispanic male immigrants near the intersection of Southwest Boulevard and Summit Street in Kansas City Missouri's Westside neighborhood, causing an increase in criminal activity and public intoxication. Residents and business owners felt powerless to do anything about it. Citizens, business owners, and police observing this congregation on a daily basis were unable to create a comprehensive plan to alleviate the problem. This area serves as the neighborhood's "Latino Downtown," with restaurants, ethnic grocery stores and retail outlets creating high foot and vehicle traffic. Children living south of the Boulevard walk this route to schools, the library, and the community center which are all located north of the Boulevard. The intersection and parking lot of a convenience/liquor store doubled as a destination point for newly arriving immigrants and as an unofficial ad-hoc hiring site for day laborers for over fifty years.

Officers assigned to the Westside CAN Center (WCAN), a community policing and neighborhood organization were approached by the Center Director, Lynda Gallon about the problem. The officers formed partnerships with a KCMO Codes Inspector, neighborhood service agencies, businesses and residents to

work collaboratively to address disorder and distress in keeping with the tenets of the "Broken Window Theory." The main problem identified during this process was the congregation (hereafter referred to as the congregation) of immigrant men and its effects on the community. Other quality of life problems identified during this process were all direct results of the congregation issues and appeared to be solvable if the larger issue was addressed.

The congregation of Hispanic male immigrants totaled upwards of 200 men during the late spring to early fall. While approximately 80% were at this location for legitimate reasons, others would loiter along the retail area and convenience/liquor store parking lot under the guise of seeking employment. Many of these men would drink alcohol, use drugs, and engage in robbery, assaults, burglaries, shoplifting, narcotics trafficking, graffiti, aggressive pan-handling, and vandalism. The men's behavior became increasingly inappropriate and violent and prostitution was rampant.

## **Analysis**

The initial analysis of this problem contained two main components: police observations and citizen involvement and observation. Citizens did not generally call the police when they observed a crime. As one citizen conveyed at a community meeting, "Don't bother calling the police because they won't do anything for you, they will just cause you more trouble than they are worth." Consequently, officers relied on daily informational meetings with Lynda Callon, attended community meetings, reviewed the limited available crime statistics and

formed partnerships with businessmen and community leaders. The officers patrolled the neighborhood on foot when possible, stopping to chat with residents and business owners in order to form positive relationships as well as gather information relating to crime. Over a period of time this created a more steady and reliable stream of information from the citizens in the area. The officers found that the numbers of documented and undocumented Hispanic male immigrants around this area had grown from relatively manageable to uncontrollable. With this increase, the inherent crime wave and economic despair followed. The retail segment of the area suffered financially as their customer base declined because the area was perceived as too dangerous for suburbanites to visit. Tourists were advised to stay away and the KCMO Convention and Visitors Bureau advised the Westside Business Association there was little they could do to promote the business area until the businesses could provide a safer environment. This area was one of the highest calls for services locations for the police for general disorder disturbances.

The stakeholders in this situation can be broken up into three distinct groups: group 1, area citizens, businesses, tourists; group 2, documented and undocumented men willing to work; and, group 3, documented and undocumented men not willing to work.

The desires of group 1 centered on the quality of life issues that were deteriorating because of the congregation. They did not feel safe in their homes, business, or shopping. This perception had reduced economic growth in the area.

The desires of group 2 were also centered on quality of life issues. They

wanted employment opportunities to improve their lives and the lives of their families. They wanted the chance to prove that they could be viable community members, but were sometimes incorrectly labeled as members of group 3. They too were frustrated by the lack of opportunities and believed that having a clear distinction between themselves and group 3 would increase the number of employers who would utilize their labor pool thereby creating more jobs and ultimately raising the hourly wage received by the workers.

Finally, the desires of group 3 were centered on selfish needs and a disregard for community standards. Most members of this group were criminals who could not or would not change their lifestyles and others in this group need motivation to become productive.

Prior to this endeavor, there was no documented comprehensive response to resolve this problem. This was due in part to the police not being able to solve the problem through traditional policing methods and the citizens not trusting the police enough to share with them their concerns. The first step in solving this problem was to establish communication between the police and groups 1 and 2. The main problem was the congregation of documented and undocumented workers in and around the parking lot of the convenience/liquor store. This problem had continued unchecked for years growing more complex and now threatening the viability of the area. Other problems stemming from the congregation were members of group 3 camouflaging themselves among group 2 and committing criminal acts with little or no detection. Through the use of intimidation and physical violence, group 3 operated without fear of being reported to the police. Members

of group 2 who were looking for employment opportunities often swarmed vehicles pulling into the liquor store parking lot. Others ran into the streets as vehicles slowed down to stop for the traffic signal thinking the drivers might hold employment opportunities. While the men negotiated a job opportunity, their actions resulted in accidents and brought traffic to a standstill during the morning rush hour.

Public intoxication reached epidemic proportions among members of group 3 and when some members of group 2 did not work they also filled idle time by drinking. Members of group 2 and 3 were often observed by police and citizens passed out on the sidewalks and they urinated and defecated publicly in alleyways and in residential yards. During summer nights, members of these groups crept into yards turning on outdoor faucets for drinking water or to shower nude using garden hoses. The more the community ignored the men, the more flagrant the behavior became. Some members of group 3 defiantly faced the streets when urinating on a public thoroughfare and when the businesses called the police their storefronts or automobiles were vandalized in retaliation if members of group 3 suspected they phoned the police.

The laborers were generally paid in cash which served as a magnet for prostitutes and it was discovered that members of all three groups patronized the prostitutes who worked along Southwest Boulevard.

Solutions to the issues of the congregation of groups 2 and 3 were discussed between Ms. Callon, KCPD, and area residents and merchants. It became clear to the officers that the neighborhood wanted a respectful and



humane way to successfully co-exist with the workers. They wanted to address the conduct of the men individually, not automatically categorize all the men in the area as members of group 3.

The response to this problem gradually transitioned from use of traditional police techniques to community based policing, but traditional techniques tended to take precedence. Typically, officers began spending 95 percent of their shift at the labor site implementing a program of aggressively policing the labor pool area. As a result, the officers made up to ten arrests a day for ordinance violations and narcotics possession. It was clear that this type of enforcement was not a solution to the major problem since it addressed the symptoms and not the cause.

Traditional law enforcement methods did not work well for several reasons. Few men carried identification and most were non-English speaking, allowing the men to easily lie about their identity and provide false information each time an officer encountered them. An arrested offender would be released on bond or recognizance well before his prints were matched to his past arrest. The latent print section at KCPD did not possess the capability to quickly identify offenders and if the offender did not encounter the same officer or use the same name, he did not have to answer in court for his offenses. Communication with the men was difficult because of the language barrier. With this in mind, officers developed and compiled an arrest photo book to insure that an offender was booked under the same name each time he was arrested. If the subject used aliases, none of which were his true identity, the officers would utilize one of the aliases he had given and compile a new criminal history. The officers attempted to match past arrests to the

subject and include those arrests on the criminal history. If the latent print section positively identified an offender, all information was then transferred to that file name.

Another obstacle to traditional law enforcement was the difficulty in determining which men were at the labor site to work and which were there to commit crimes. The offenders feigned looking for work by approaching cars when the police were present, but seldom accepted work. Some offenders worked to earn enough to buy alcohol or drugs and spent the rest of the day drunk or high, camouflaged among the other men. With constant monitoring, observation, and documentation, the officers were able to differentiate between the workers sincerely seeking employment and those who were committing crimes. Because of the above factors, many non-Spanish speaking District Officers would avoid contact with these persons and conduct enforcement activity in other parts of the city.

The officers also observed men standing in the labor pool for up to 6 hours waiting for work without the availability of restrooms. As a result, indecent conduct ordinances were constantly being broken by both groups 2 and 3 who urinated in public view.

Another problematic issue was that jail did not affect the most flagrant offenders of city ordinances. Once arrested they would spend 2-8 hours in jail, eat, sleep, and be released with a signature bond. Incarceration was not a deterrent. For example, officers took the same subject to jail for drinking in public three times in one 10-hour shift.

Other factors also made traditional police approaches ineffective. If KCPD enacted "zero-tolerance", the neighborhood and Latino leadership felt KCPD was targeting Hispanics and the Latino community. They interpreted these actions as civil liberties-civil rights issues, if KCPD took a more laissez-faire approach the community believed the police department was ignoring them and did not take their problems seriously.

Other traditional techniques used but found to be unsuccessful were DHSICE (formally INS) sweeps. They bred hysteria and cries of victimization which created dissention and more ill will, preventing relationship building between the Hispanic community and KCPD. Due to the lack of DHSICE manpower and resources that would ensure that more workers did not return three days after an DHSICE sweep, it was business as usual for those not taken into custody. Historically, the relationship between KCPD and the Hispanic community on the Westside has been filled with contention and mistrust and "sweeps" only further exacerbated the situation.

## **Response**

While conducting the traditional policing model, discussions were on going between the community and KCPD. After significant research about day labor issues across the country was presented to officers by Ms. Callon, discussion intensified and it was determined that a solution was the development of an environment where behavior could be monitored and controlled, if possible, by the workers themselves.

If KCPD or DHSICE used all its resources and shut down the current site, Groups 2 and 3 would be displaced and simply set up another hiring site at another location, taking with them all the inherent problems. The problem was approached not solely as a law enforcement challenge, but the economic issue that it was, the workers needed jobs and employers needed workers.

It was identified that many of the workers were actually a part of the community. The amount of time they spent in the community looking for employment created their membership into the community. As long as law enforcement believed that this was an immigration issue and ignored the real issues for group 2 and 3, the whole community suffered.

One thought was that a day labor site monitored by KCPD could be the solution to many neighborhood problems. A plan was formed whereby the KCPD and WCAN Center would develop and oversee a site where the day laborers could congregate in a structured environment with set boundaries and codes of behavior, thereby improving the safety and security of the community and the economic prospects of the workers and area business. The officers working at the site would become familiar with the men and be able to discern between members of group 2 and 3. Then respond with actions appropriate for the behavior encountered.

This process would provide a mechanism that helped to "separate the wheat from the chaff." Those men sincerely interested in working (group 2) could separate themselves from those merely interested in criminal behavior (group 3). After assessing the root causes of observed inappropriate behaviors, it was decided that additional community partners would be cultivated to offer services to

address the social and physical needs of groups 2 and 3.

The officers and Ms. Callon developed the goals, outline and criteria for a Day Laborer Center (DLC). The officers knew that in order for the new DLC to be a success the following must occur:

- The men must want to come to the new location. The officers believed this would be accomplished by the services provided at the center.
- The employers must pick up the workers at the new facility. Three months before opening the officers would begin passing out informational flyers at the labor pool in Spanish and English about the new location. Spanish language radio and newspapers would inform the community about the new site.
- All workers must utilize the new DLC.

During planning concerns arose that some workers would not follow the rules and remain at the liquor store, undermining the strategic plan. To assure compliance, two extra officers were stationed at the convenience/liquor store for the first six weeks of operation to monitor and encourage compliance from employers and workers. It was assumed that workers who did not move to the new location intended to engage in unlawful behaviors and not find employment.

The WCAN Center began limited outreach with the goal of creating a day laborer center. The men were offered use of the bathrooms, phones to reach employers, and shelter from inclement weather. In exchange, they were expected

to act well mannered and abide by the law. The men were expected to contribute to the community through free labor (introducing the concept of volunteerism and service to the community) by abating graffiti, picking up litter, mowing yards for elderly residents and helping throughout the neighborhood. This helped promote the idea that the majority of men were indeed a part of the community and not members of group 3.

One primary concern was the estimated 35 to 40 hardcore alcoholics in group 3 who seldom worked but loitered at the labor site daily. They were responsible for the majority of the ordinance violations and not deterred by incarceration in the city jail. Most of these men had entered the country illegally. The local director of INS was contacted and advised that although these men had not been arrested for significant crimes, they disproportionately negatively affected the quality of life for the residents in the area. The Director agreed to investigate the residency status of those individuals identified by the KCPD as habitual nuisances and criminals.

With the cooperation of the DHSICE, the officers immediately identified the worst offenders of public nuisance laws. They were taken to DHSICE for deportation proceedings, showing this group that the criminal justice system had consequences they truly feared. This had a tremendously positive effect on the quality of life for the residents of the Westside because the worst offenders were deported from the country and others moved elsewhere to avoid deportation. The remaining men also knew that if they did not obey the law even minor violations could result in deportation. For the first time the Westside community was praising

DHSICE.

It was immediately apparent that the WCAN Center office, although it worked well in a limited outreach capacity, was not a location that could meet the future needs of the organization or work as the DLC. The benefit of moving the center was two-fold: the workers no longer would have a legitimate purpose to congregate around the convenience/liquor store and area business would not have to worry about the workers loitering around the area intimidating customers.

Officers along with the community identified the following as criteria for the new DLC site and WCAN Center:

- Good access to major thoroughfares
- Space to accommodate 200 men
- Near the current location to ease transition
- Far enough away from the liquor store to have a deterrent factor
- Away from most of the existing businesses and residences
- Amenities, a restrooms, shower, laundry facilities, lockers, kitchen and meeting area
- Maximum rent for the space could not exceed \$400 per month including utilities

In January 2003, the officers conducted extensive site search identifying a vacant, former machine shop at 2136 Jefferson that met the criteria. Unoccupied for 15 years, this dilapidated building was a neighborhood eyesore with multiple building code violations. This building, located on a gateway intersection of the Westside neighborhood, was two blocks away from convenience/liquor store and

directly across the street from a covered public parking lot. This seldom used public parking lot had excellent access to the highway.

The officers contacted the owner of the building and explained the intended use of the space. The owner agreed to donate the building to the WCAN Center rent-free for a period of five years.

Officers' contacted representatives from Turner Construction to explain the situation and ask for assistance. Turner Construction representatives were convinced the DLC was an honorable solution to an existing problem. They agreed to rehabilitate the building pro bono. After one year of construction the new Westside CAN Center opened without one dollar of taxpayer money being spent.

The WCAN Center began issuing an ID card enabling the police to identify the men and establish an emergency contact in their country of origin. In turn, the card will help them cash their checks and they will be able to present an ID to obtain permanent housing. This also allows the police department to have access to names and photographs of several hundred men who are in the country that ordinarily would not be available. This will be extremely useful in identifying suspects involved in crime throughout out the Kansas City area.

### **Assessment**

The new Westside Can Center and DLC opened in February, 2004. In the time it has been open the results have been remarkable:

- A dilapidated building was brought into code compliance,



transforming an eyesore to an attractive structure. Turner Construction donated \$150,000.00 in professional services to rehabilitate the structure with no taxpayer monies spent

- Men no longer congregate along Southwest Boulevard
- The traffic hazard of men running in the street after employers is abated
- School children and residents no longer have to walk by hordes of harassing men
- The worst offenders of the quality of life issues and criminal behavior were deported with few returning. To date 54 offenders were transported to DHSICE for deportation proceedings. Many of those offenders were responsible for a majority of the vandalism and destruction of property committed to intimidate the citizen and business owners and discourage them from calling the Police.
- The problem of public urination, defecation and showering in citizen's yards has been all but eliminated
- Prostitutes have moved elsewhere due to police presence.
- Business owners are ecstatic as sales increase, which they attribute directly to the men's absence. One business charted a 20% increase in sales and a 15% decrease in shrinkage.
- The neighborhood is very pleased by the role of KCPD and DHSICE in resolving this longstanding community problem. The esteem and respect for KCPD has immeasurably increased

- Neighborhood cooperation with the police has increased. Calls to the WCAN Center to report crime in the neighborhood have increased by 40%. Callers now trust the Police enough to leave their contact information
- District officers support this project and routinely patrol the area to help ensure its success
- The workers at the DLC are now employable. Because the DLC has been legitimized employers no longer fear being robbed or assaulted and they no longer classify the workers as "drunks". This has led to an increase in the number of employers picking up workers.
- Since implementation of the WCAN/DLC, officers have gone from receiving no tips on criminal activity to a steady flow from the laborers on robberies, burglaries, drug dealers.
- The men are policing themselves by turning in "rule-breakers"
- Non-court ordered community service. Workers not finding employment at the DLC are volunteering their labor to the community. They work throughout the Westside painting over graffiti, picking up litter on the Boulevard, cutting the grass of elderly residents and maintaining the flowerpots along the Boulevard. They also maintain the WCAN Center and the DLC by cleaning it daily. Service to the community gives the idle men something positive to do making them feel like they contribute to the community in which

they work and live.

- Members of group 1 volunteer at the center interacting with the men.
- Two officers work out of the CAN Center and monitor the DLC requiring approximately 60% of their work hours. This is significantly less than the 95% of their work hours spent doing aggressive enforcement at the old labor pool without solving the problem. This extra time allows the officers to focus on other areas of the community which need attention.

2002 aggressive enforcement period.

2003 Can Center began limited outreach.

2004 New Can Center/DLC Opened statistics for 2004 from Jan 1-June 1 .

| Arrest offences    | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 |
|--------------------|------|------|------|
| drinking in public | 117  | 67   | 7    |
| Indecent exposure  | 14   | 3    | 1    |
| Disorderly Conduct | 5    | 1    | 0    |
| Trespassing        | 26   | 11   | 3    |

The progress and achievement that has been accomplished would not have been possible without the combined efforts of all involved. In keeping with this, a concerted effort will be maintained by the community and KCPD to have open dialogue and look for proactive answers to problems that may arise in the future.

### **Agency and Officer Information**

Officers Matthew Tomasic, Brian Brewer and Chad Gardner initiated this problem solving effort. However, their efforts were supported by the command staff of the KCMO Police Department. S/A John McKenna and S/A Bryant Rogers of DHSICE were also instrumental in effecting change along Southwest Blvd. The KCPD officers received problem solving training as part of the academy curriculum and reviewed information from other sources pertaining to the day labor problem and how it had been addressed in other areas. This project was completed without requiring budget adjustments by the KCPD and resulted in no overall costs to the department.

For further information you may contact:

Officer Matthew Tomasic

Kansas City Missouri Police Department - Central Patrol Division

1125 E. Locust

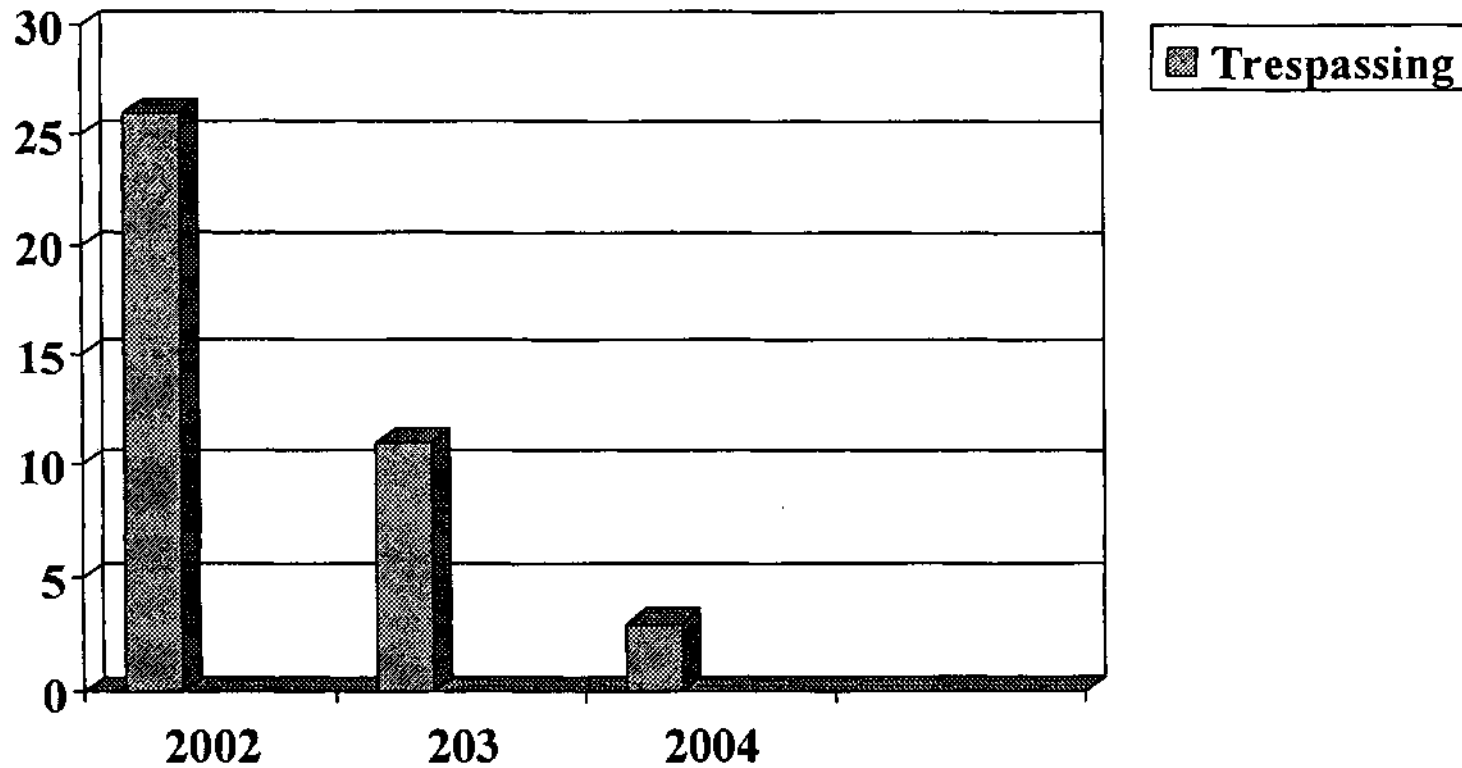
Kansas City, MO 64155

Phone: 816-234-5510

E-Mail: [MTomasic@kcpd.org](mailto:MTomasic@kcpd.org)

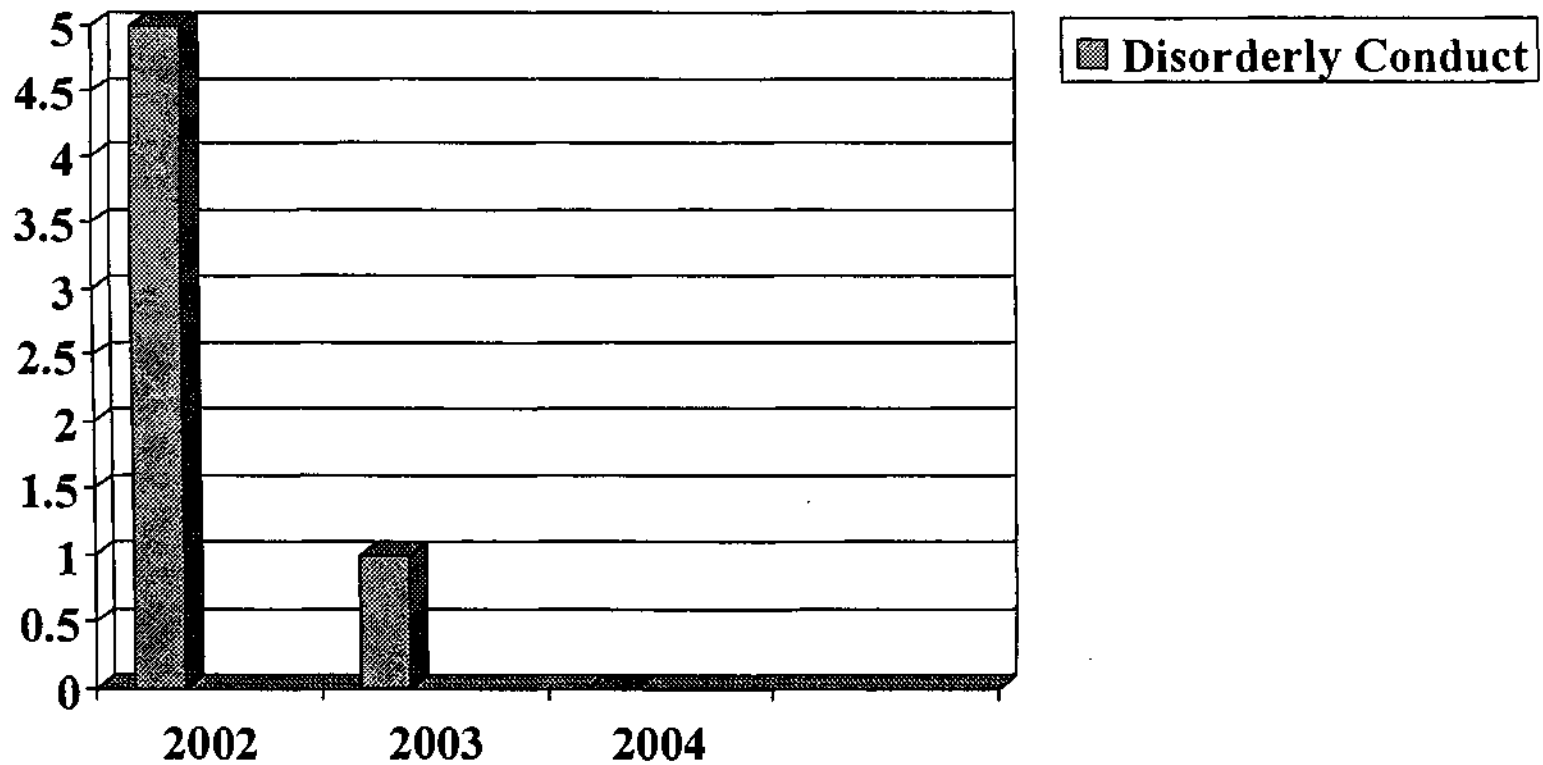
# WESTSIDE CAN CENTER - DAY LABORER CENTER

## Disorder Offenses Arrests



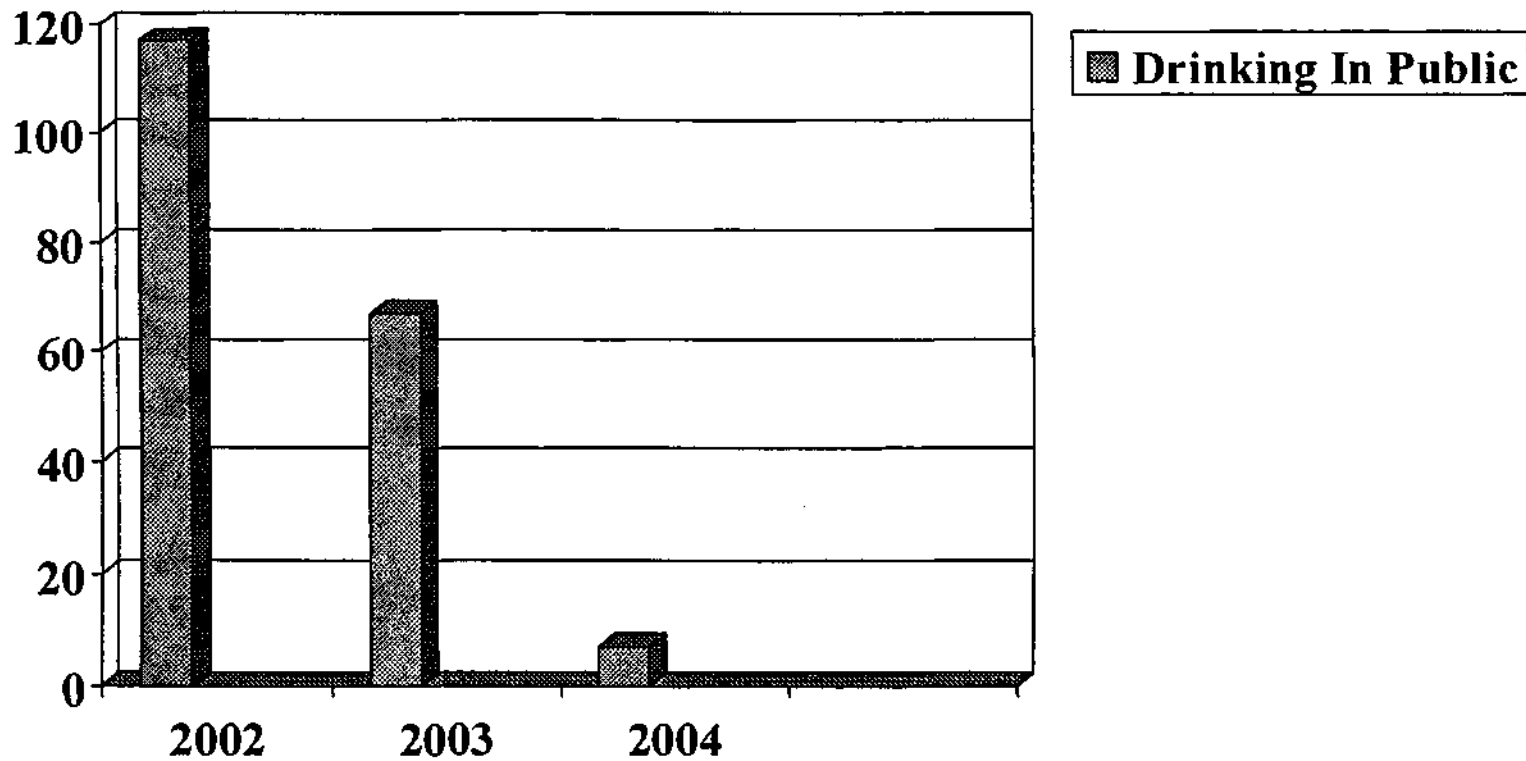
# WESTSIDE CAN CENTER - DAY LABORER CENTER

## Disorder Offenses Arrests



# WESTSIDE CAN CENTER - DAY LABORER CENTER

## Disorder Offenses Arrests



# WESTSIDE CAN CENTER - DAY LABORER CENTER

## Disorder Offenses Arrests





# Oficiales de CAN trabajan para limpiar crímenes menores en Westside

Si los residentes de Westside en Kansas City, Mo. y los comerciantes han notado una reciente disminución en ofensas menores como embriaguez en público en Southwest Boulevard, puede deberse en parte a los policías Brian Brewer y Matt Tomasic.

Brewer y Tomasic patrullan del norte al sur de las calles 12 a las 31 y al este y oeste desde Broadway hasta State Line Road como oficiales de Westside Community Action Network (CAN) para el Departamento de Policía de Kansas City (KCPD).

De acuerdo con Lynda Callon, coordinadora comunitaria para el Westside CAN Center, los líderes civiles formaron CAN a mediados de la década de los 90 como un programa comunitario de policía tomando como base los modelos de otras comunidades de EUA.

"Es como una situación

## CAN officers working to clean up petty crime in Westside

By Shawn Roney

If Kansas City, Mo.'s Westside residents and business owners have noticed a recent decrease in petty offenses such as public drunkenness on Southwest Boulevard, it may be due in part to police officers Brian Brewer and Matt Tomasic.

Brewer and Tomasic patrol north and south from 12<sup>th</sup> Street to 31<sup>st</sup> Street and east and west from Broadway to State Line Road as Westside Community Action Network (CAN) officers for the Kansas City Police Department (KCPD). According to Lynda Callon, community coordinator for the Westside CAN Center, civic leaders developed

## CAN officers

Cont. from Page 1

resolver los problemas que tiene la comunidad" dijo Tomasic, que ha sido un oficial de KCPD por ocho años, incluyendo unos cuatro meses como oficial de CAN.

"No es solamente un trabajo reactivo como parece ser la mayor parte de nuestro trabajo, donde respondemos solamente a llamadas", dijo Brewer, oficial de CAN desde marzo, 2001 y oficial de KCPD por 3 ½ años. "Aquí, podemos realmente identificar los problemas después de hablar con los residentes y los comerciantes, y podemos pensar y crear soluciones juntos".

Basándose en hablar con la gente, Tomasic y Brewer empezaron a enfatizarse con los "problemas de calidad de vida" en el Westside, incluyendo embriaguez en público y mendigar, dijo Tomasic. Hasta ahora, la gente ha apreciado su presencia, dijo Brewer.

"Creo que nadie ha dicho algo negativo desde que trabajamos en el distrito", dijo Brewer.

"Estamos formando la confianza con ellos (residentes y comerciantes)" dijo Tomasic.

Cuando se le preguntó la efectividad de la pareja de policías, Callon respondió, "Creo que están haciendo lo mejor que se les permite hacer".

Sin embargo, Brewer y Tomasic han enfrentado por lo menos una barrera en el área de crímenes menores: la barrera del lenguaje. Tomasic habla solamente un poco de español, Brewer que habla "un poco de alemán", dijo que poco a poco está aprendiendo palabras en español "aquí y allá" y puede comprender algunos enunciados.

"Hemos... tratado de encontrar algunas clases de español a las que podamos ir", explicó Tomasic.

Debido a los numerosos habitantes de habla hispana sería útil saber español, dijo Tomasic; pero los residentes de habla hispana han sido pacientes y los han apoyado interpretando para ellos.

"Ha habido más de una ocasión donde nos ha ayudado un comerciante o ciudadano que es bilingüe", dijo Tomasic.

Para hacer comentarios o expresar inquietudes sobre la vigilancia en Westside, llame a Westside CAN Center al (816) 842-1298.

ties.

"It's like the old ... cop-on-the-beat (situation), where you get to know the business owners and the citizen of the community and you work with them to solve the problems that the community has," said Tomasic, who's been a KCPD officer for eight years, including about four months as a CAN officer.

"It's not just a reactive job like most of our job seems to be, where we're just answering calls for service," said Brewer, a CAN officer since March 2001 and a KCPD officer for 3½ years. "Here, we can actually identify problems after speaking with the residents and the business owners, and we're able to put our heads together and think of solutions."

Based on talking with people, Tomasic and Brewer have recently begun focusing on addressing the Westside's "quality-of-life issues," including public drunkenness and panhandling, Tomasic said. So far, people have appreciated their presence, Brewer said.

"I can't think of anybody that's said anything negative since we've worked this district," said Brewer.

"We're building a trust with them (residents and business owners)," said Tomasic.

When asked about the duo's effectiveness, Callon replied: "I think they're doing the best job they're allowed to do."

Brewer and Tomasic have faced at least one barrier, however, in the area's addressing petty crimes: a language barrier. Tomasic speaks only a little Spanish. Brewer, who speaks "some German," said he's gradually learning Spanish words "here and there" and can understand a few sentences.

"We've been ... trying to identify some (Spanish) classes that we can go to," Tomasic explained.

Because of the Westside's sizeable Spanish-speaking population, it would be helpful to know Spanish, said Tomasic. But the area's Spanish-speaking residents have been patient and have supported the officers by translating for them.

"There's been more than one occasion where a business owner or citizen who is bilingual has helped us out," said Tomasic.

To make comments or express concerns about Westside policing issues, call the Westside CAN Center at (816) 842-1298.



# Westside CAN Center initiates program to address community problem



Through a new program it's overseeing, Kansas City, Mo.'s Westside Community Action Network Center is giving idle day laborers community service jobs to do in exchange for special certificates.

El Centro CAN del West Side inicia un programa para abordar un problema comunitario

By Edie R. Lambert

Los residentes del vecindario del West Side de Kansas City, Mo. esperan que una nueva iniciativa supervisada por el Westside Community Action Network (CAN) Center Inc. ayudará a resolver un problema actual.

Tradicionalmente, muchos trabajadores sin empleo en busca de trabajo han holgazaneado en la esquina de la calle Summit y Southwest Boulevard. "Mi entendimiento es que algunos de sus padres y abuelos se reunían en esa esquina en busca de empleo cuando recién llegaron a este país y sencillamente se convirtió en un sitio para gente en busca de trabajo", de acuerdo con Matthew Tomasic, uno de los dos oficiales al servicio del West Side.

Para darles a los trabajadores algo que hacer, la iniciativa que comenzó en mayo, permite a aquellos que no consiguen empleo intercambiar su tiempo y mano de obra realizando un servicio a la comunidad por certificados especiales. Bajo la supervisión del centro, los trabajadores recogen basura a lo largo del Southwest Boulevard, pintan sobre el grafiti, cortan pasto y cerciuevan la hierba. Tomasic y su compañero, Chad Gardner, generalmente transportan a los hombres a los

Residents of Kansas City Mo.'s West Side neighborhood are hoping a new initiative being overseen by the Westside Community Action Network (CAN) Center Inc. will help fix an ongoing problem.

Traditionally, many idle day laborers seeking work have loitered at the corner of Southwest Boulevard and Summit Street. "My understanding is that some of their fathers and grandfathers gathered on that corner looking for work when they first came to this country and it just became a hangout for people looking for work," according to Matthew Tomasic, one of the two community police officers serving the West Side.

To give the laborers something to do, the initiative which began in May, lets day laborers that don't find other work exchange time and effort for doing community service for special certificates. Under the center's supervision the laborers pick up trash along Southwest Boulevard, paint over graffiti, cut grass and remove weeds. Tomasic and his partner, Chad Gardner usually drive the men to the work sites because most of the laborers don't drive.

After completing their assigned work, the laborers re-

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## Westside CAN Center

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sitios de trabajo porque la mayoría de ellos no manejan.

Después de completar el trabajo asignado, los trabajadores reciben certificados que pueden canjear para usar el gimnasio en el Centro Comunitario Tony Aguirre o por ropa o artículos para el hogar en la tienda Lutheran Mission Thrift Store. También pueden utilizar el valor de sus certificados por una comida en Taquería México, el primer restaurante que participa en el programa.

"Arturo Romo acaba de adelantarse ofreciendo certificados de comida, diciendo que él quería ser parte de la solución a los problemas en el vecindario", indicó Lynda Callon, coordinadora comunitaria del West Side Can Center, quien añadió que a ella le gustaría ver participar a más restaurantes de la zona.

De acuerdo a Callon, hasta el momento se han expedido 10 certificados. Pero el número no es lo que realmente le importa a ella.

"Lo que es importante es que los trabajadores estén dispuestos a ayudar a la comunidad y que la comunidad los está ayudando", señaló.

El West Side CAN Center, un edificio para apoyo de los trabajadores, fue incorporado en 1995 y es uno de los siete de dichos centros en Kansas City, Mo. Sirve de 15 a 70 personas diariamente. Generalmente abre de 9 a.m. a 6 p.m. entre semana (el horario puede variar un poco) y está localizado en el 2415 de la calle Summit, ofreciendo varios servicios. Algunos inclusive lo usan como domicilio de correos. Además Callon conecta a los trabajadores diurnos con otros recursos comunitarios, tales como centros de salud y servicios de salud mental.

Además proporciona un lugar donde los trabajadores se pueden reunir regularmente con un representante de Alcohólicos Anónimos o un consejero del Mattie Rhodes Center. Los trabajadores también pueden consultar a un abogado y expertos de la salud sobre enfermedades transmisibles.

El sitio está abordando algunos de los problemas más urgentes del área en lo que Tomasic considera "una situación donde todos salen ganando". El crimen, el conar en la vía pública y los índices de vagancia están disminuyendo y los trabajadores tienen oportunidades de ser viables, miembros que contribuyen con la comunidad. Tomasic atribuye eso a los esfuerzos combinados de la comunidad para dirigir estos problemas.

"El vecindario se ha convertido en un lugar más agradable", refirió. "Las personas se tratan mejor entre sí".

ceive certificates they can redeem for use of the gym at the Tony Aguirre Community Center or for clothing or household goods at the Lutheran Mission Thrift Store. They also can apply the value of their certificates toward a meal at Taquería México, the first participating restaurant in the program.

"Arturo Romo just stepped forward to offer the meal certificates, saying he wanted to be part of the solution to the problems in the neighborhood," said Lynda Callon, Westside CAN Center community coordinator, who added that she would like to see more West Side restaurants participate.

According to Callon, about 10 certificates have been issued so far. But the number isn't what really matters to her.

"What's important is that the laborers are willing to help the community and the community is helping them," she said.

An outreach facility for day laborers, the Westside CAN Center was incorporated in 1995 and is one of seven such centers in Kansas City, Mo. The site serves from 15 to 70 people a day. Generally open 9 a.m.-6 p.m. weekdays (hours may vary slightly) and located at 2415 Summit, it offers various services. For example, day laborers can call prospective employers or have employers call them there. Some even use it as a mailing address. In addition, Callon connects day laborers to other community resources, such as health centers and mental health services.

The site also provides a place where laborers can meet regularly with an Alcoholics Anonymous representative or a Mattie Rhodes Center counselor. Laborers also may consult with an attorney and health experts in communicable diseases.

The site is addressing some of the area's most urgent problems through what Tomasic considers "a win-win situation." Crime, public urination and vagrancy rates are waning and the day laborers have chances to become viable, contributing community members. Tomasic attributes that to the community's combined efforts to address the issues.

"The neighborhood has become a much kinder place," he said. "People treat people better."

# New day labor site hopes to solve old problems

By MARY SANCHEZ  
The Kansas City Star

As long as anyone can remember, the intersection at Southwest Boulevard and Summit Street has been a drive-through labor source.

Every morning, 20, 30, and in peak summer months, as many as 80 men gather, waiting to be hired for the day, the week, sometimes for only a few hours.

The men — mostly Mexican — bargain for work with people who cruise the area seeking cheap day laborers. Many work in Kansas City's suburbs — roofing, dry walling, pouring concrete, landscaping and hauling brush.

The well-known scene will change — or at least shift a few blocks east — under a plan being crafted by the Kansas City Police Department to oversee a day labor site at 2136 Jefferson St.

The Jefferson site — which will

double as a new location for the existing nonprofit Community Action Network — mirrors similar efforts in cities such as Los Angeles, Chicago and Austin, Texas. In those cities, police, city and nonprofit monitored sites are controlling drinking and loitering among day laborers and stopping unscrupulous employers from exploiting the men.

"As long as the employers are coming down here, then people are going to be standing on the corner," said Chad Gardner, a Kansas City police officer who, along with partner Matt Tomasic, is helping orchestrate the opening of the new labor location.

Tomasic and Gardner, who work out of the CAN center, plan a December opening.

Most of the men do not qualify for long-term legal entry into the

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THE KANSAS CITY STAR  
Thursday, November 27, 2003

## FROM THE COVER

### WORKERS: KC police to oversee day labor site

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United States, which usually requires a sponsor, such as employers or relatives who are citizens.

Yet many have been in the country for years, sending wages home to family in Mexico and other Central American countries. Some are homeless. Some share apartments in the Northeast area.

Day laborers earn \$8 to \$10 an hour, the men said. Roofers with good skills can make \$15 an hour.

The officers brush off attitudes that question police aiding people illegally in the country.

"These guys are very much a part of the community," Tomasic said. "Whether people want to admit it or not."

The labor site is the latest solution to an old problem for the West Side.

Because of some of the men's legal status, they draw the public's disdain for that issue, and they are open to exploitation by employers.

Employers know the men are less likely to complain about not being paid or being asked to do dangerous work because they fear deportation.

Numerous studies have found about 50 percent of day laborers have trouble getting paid.

When asked about nonpayment, most of the men have stories.

"No money, no nothing," one man said.

Gardner and Tomasic have mediated such disputes as part of their duties patrolling the West Side and downtown areas.

"It's stealing," Gardner said. "It's a crime."

The men also are crime targets because they often carry their wages in cash.

But the officers and other neighborhood leaders are just as unwilling to tolerate problems by the men.

"They can't be drinking on the boulevard or selling drugs," said Lynda Callon, community coordinator of the Westside CAN Center, now at 2415 Summit St. "If they are, their choice is either go to jail or get deported."

The predominantly Mexican-American West Side has struggled and co-existed with the day laborers for years.

Families have generations-old stories of feeding the men and coaxing them as they travel for work in other states.



DAVID PULLIAM/The Kansas City Star

Police Officers Chad Gardner (left) and Matt Tomasic and Lynda Callon, with the Community Action Network, work with day laborers.

At other times, boulevard business owners have grown frustrated. Customers feared the men, and some of them harassed female patrons.

The mid-'90s saw a shelter open nearby. It closed when the number of men became more than donations could feed.

Callon, Tomasic and Gardner — who speaks Spanish — hope their new plan will be a permanent solution.

"All of the pain, anger or sadness about this situation needs to be directed and focused on demanding Congress pass immigration laws that work," Callon said. "If we have whole categories of our economy that are dependent on immigrant labor, then let's make it work."

In the meantime, Callon said, the new labor site will deal with the reality of the men's presence.

#### A welcome change

Callon is credited with being the force behind the new center.

She makes the men pick up trash along the boulevard, paint over graffiti and do other odd jobs in exchange for food and clothing vouchers to be redeemed at a local thrift store and restaurant.

"If they are looking for a helping hand, we are happy to be that hand," she said. "But they can't be a neighborhood nuisance."

The new center will have 40 lockers for the men to keep clothes and identification such as birth certificates and work authorization cards.

Men awaiting work on a recent morning all knew about the new

center and welcomed its opening.

One man, from the coastal Mexican city of Veracruz, arrived from Maine two weeks ago. The man agreed with others, saying a formal labor site and police presence will discourage bad employers and workers interested in drinking, not work.

Tomasic and Gardner plan to encourage employers to drive to the new location to find the workers, a more out-of-the-way spot under the Interstate 35 overpass.

Callon hopes the men will organize, warning each other of employers who don't pay or who put workers in danger.

A September 2002 General Accounting Office report found day laborers are "vulnerable to various types of workplace dangers and abuses."

The GAO report was generated at the request of Rep. Luis Guterrez, an Illinois Democrat.

Guterrez introduced the Day Labor Fairness and Protection Act, which among other things, bans fees on cashing checks and ensures a minimum daily wage. The measure is not expected to pass this session.

Most fair labor standards apply to the men.

"The courts have pretty uniformly said you have the right to be paid for work done, regardless of legal status," said Rebecca Smith, coordinator of the Immigrant Workers Rights Project of the National Employment Law Project.

The Wage and Hour Division of the Department of Labor recently distributed fair wage handouts on the boulevard in English and Span-

ish. But enforcement is difficult. Because most of the men are paid in cash, there is no paper trail.

Police and the men say it is a mistake to assume all day laborers are undocumented or living illegally in the United States.

Many of the workers have lived in the United States for more than a decade and speak English well.

About two to three times a year, immigration officials come to the boulevard to arrest people illegally in the country. About 20 men were arrested last week in a raid.

But immigration officials focus their limited manpower on immigrants with criminal backgrounds and terrorists, said Mike Smith, interim resident agent in charge of Kansas City's Immigration and Customs Enforcement office.

"I don't say we look the other way," Smith said. "We are looking right at it. But we have certain constraints of time and manpower."

#### 'She's our mother'

By about 9:30 a.m. the men who haven't found work often visit Callon at the center. She offers a place to watch television, get a cup of hot coffee, use the bathroom.

Callon queries one man, recently diagnosed with emphysema, on his struggle to quit smoking.

On another day, Callon guided a man to the hospital. Blisters erupted on his body after he was hired to clean a lot filled with poison ivy.

She has coordinated mental health attention through nearby Mattie Rhodes Counseling and Art Center. Depression is a common problem because the men are separated from their families.

Callon speaks little Spanish, but is reverent.

One worker recently returned to Mexico for the holiday season. Before he left, the man bought a disposable camera and snapped a portrait of Callon to show to his mother in Mexico.

"She's our mother," Johnatan Starr, who is half Dakota Sioux and half Mexican, said of Callon. Starr was born in Sioux City, Iowa but raised in Sinaloa, Mexico.

"It will be a good place," Starr said of the new office. "It will be like a base for us."

To reach Mary Sanchez, call (816) 234-4752 or send e-mail to msanchez@kstar.com.

# B M

www.kansascity.com

## COMMENTARY



STEVE PENN

### *It pays to work as a team*

**I**t was a West Side problem that needed a metrowide solution. The problem was eventually resolved as a result of one very tenacious woman and some very generous Kansas Citians.

Seeing the day laborers in front of Royal Liquors, at 801 Southwest Blvd., waiting for work was a regular sight. They would stand in the cold rain and the intense heat.

Not any more. As the result of the efforts of Lynda Callon, a community coordinator, and numerous benevolent businesses, the day laborers now have a comfortable and safe place to wait — inside the new Westside Community Action Network Center.

The CAN center, as it's called, is located at 2136 Jefferson St. It's the city's seventh to open since the community policing program was implemented here in 1993.

Two police officers, a code enforcement officer and a neighborhood housing preservationist are assigned to work out of the center.

"This is triage for the neighborhood," Callon said.

The facility has a kitchen with a refrigerator and a stove. There is also a washer, dryer and two bathrooms.

Here's what's astonishing: Everything was donated. That includes everything inside and the building itself.

The total amount of services, time, merchandise and materials donated to the project is estimated to be around \$150,000.

The laborers can use the telephone to call potential employers. If they are homeless, they can use the address for mailing purposes.

Last Thursday the City Council acknowledged Callon and all of the contributors for their collaboration. Numerous council members stood to praise the group.

"This is in recognition of the wonderful cooperative venture in which you all have been engaged in," Mayor Kay Barnes said. "I was so impressed when I had the chance to see it."

K.B. Winterowd's father owned the building and decided to donate it.

"We weren't using it to its capacity," Winterowd said. "It's a good old building that we will now be able to put to good use for the neighborhood."

Turner Construction Co. provided the construction work pro bono. Peckham Guyton Albers and Viets Inc. designed the project at no charge.

Tom Roberts with CFM Distributors, a heating and cooling distributor in Kansas City, donated the air conditioning.

"This is a model project of how to turn something into a real community asset," Roberts said. "You need to have people like Lynda, who was driven to get this thing done. Lynda's passion was contagious."

Officer Matthew Tomasic is assigned to the Westside CAN Center. Tomasic contacted the building's owner and then called an old college friend who worked for Turner Construction.

"The generosity on the part of everybody has just been amazing," Tomasic said.

Genaro Ruiz, a manager of Hispanic Economic Development Corp., said the center is important.

"We believe the Westside CAN Center is an integral part of the West Side," Ruiz said.

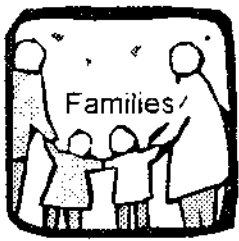
When I visited the center last week, one man was playing dominoes while waiting for work.

"This is a place where people get help," the man said. "It's like a house, a new house for the community. We appreciate the help."

I applaud the spirit of unity that surrounds the Westside CAN Center. The structure will keep the laborers safer.

I hope the new center's presence will deter greedy companies from taking advantage of the workers.

The reach Steve Penn, call (816) 234-4417 or send e-mail to [spenn@kctstar.com](mailto:spenn@kctstar.com).



Westside Community Action Network  
*Community Partnerships and Community Together*  
2136 Jefferson Street, Kansas City, MO 64108  
O: 816.842.1298 – Fax: 816. 842,1241 - Email: westcan@crn.org



## IMPORTANT NOTICE TO CONTRACTORS

Due to complaints from businesses and citizens, **effective, Monday, March 1, 2004, the new site to pick up day laborers will be the parking lot under I-35** at the intersection of Southwest Blvd and Jefferson Street (just north of California Taqueria, north side of 23<sup>rd</sup> Street.)

Contractors who pick up day laborers along the business district of Southwest Blvd will be subject to the trespassing ordinance.

Thank you very much for your cooperation and assistance.

Call the Westside CAN Center 816.842.1298 with questions

## NOTA IMPORTANTE PARA CONTRATISTAS

Debido a las quejas de los negociantes y residentes, **a partir del lunes, 1ero de Marzo, 2004, el nuevo sitio para recoger a los trabajadores será el estacionamiento debajo de la I-35** y la esquina de Southwest Boulevard y la Calle Jefferson (al-norte de la California Taqueria, al norte de la Calle 23)

Contratistas que recojan a trabajadores enfrente de los negocios del Southwest Blvd. serán sujetos al reglamento municipal de entrada ilegal.

Muchas gracias por su asistencia y cooperación.

Si tiene preguntas, llame a Westside CAN Center al 816.842.1298.





**Sept. 22, 2003**



**Oct. 22, 2003**



**Oct. 29, 2003**



**Dec. 5, 2003**





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