

# MHU News

Quarterly Newsletter of the Houston Police Department's Mental Health Unit

Fourth Quarter 2011

## PTSD Documentary

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## C O V E R S T O R Y

# Senior Officer Randy Crowder Receives CIT Officer-of-the-Quarter Award

Senior Police Officer Randy Crowder, of the Northeast Patrol Division, is one of the department's most dedicated CIT officers. One example of Randy's dedication and compassion for helping people is the case of a 15-year-old with bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. This adolescent, who is 5 foot 10 inches tall and weighs 220 pounds, has punched holes in the sheetrock of his house, has punched holes in a television and has physically acted out in other ways when he has been in mental health crises. Officer Crowder says this adolescent is a sweet kid when he is not raging in crisis due to his mental illness.

Most officers responding to this adolescent have been unable to de-escalate his behavior. In three instances, Officer Crowder has been dispatched to respond and each time Randy was able to verbally de-escalate the situation. Now,

whenever the son goes into crisis, his mother calls the police and specifically asks for Officer Crowder.

This adolescent also has problems at school. The counselors also have difficulty controlling his behavior. Before getting violent, the adolescent clenches his fists, hyperventilates, and the veins in

his arms start "popping out." Understandably, the counselors are intimidated by him.

Randy told the mother, who didn't understand her son's mental illness, about the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). The mother started attending NAMI meetings, has taken educational classes and attends a support group.

Randy has gone above and beyond by working with NAMI, the mother

and school counselors to help the counselors deal with the adolescent in school. This is just one of several examples of Officer Crowder's willingness to go the extra mile to help those in need.



(left to right) Lieutenant Mike Lee, Manager of the Mental Health Unit; Jinneh Dyson, Executive Director, NAMI Metropolitan Houston; Senior Officer Randy Crowder, Northeast Patrol; Senior Officer Frank Webb of the Mental Health Unit.

# Harris County Sheriff's Office Collaborates with HPD's Crisis Intervention Response Team

A press conference was held on October 27, 2011, to announce a joint Crisis Intervention Response Team (CIRT) that will serve the entire Houston/Harris County region.

The new inter-local agreement, approved by Harris County Commissioner's Court and Houston City Council, allows the Harris County Sheriff's Office to join with HPD and MHMRA's already existing CIRT program. The joint approach will allow resources to be combined throughout the city and county in an effort to reach the needs of the mental health community throughout the entire Harris County area.

"A collaborative effort to help residents of both Houston and Harris County is long overdue," said Mayor Annise Parker. "This one-of-a-kind agreement will help improve our service to the community during emergency situations. We are once again paving the way to a more efficient, common-sense approach that other cities can emulate."

HPD Executive Chief Kirk Munden said, "We are excited this collaboration will reach more citizens and will continue to set the standard for how law enforcement and mental health clinicians can work together to assist those experiencing serious mental health crises."

Since its inception in May 2008, the Crisis Intervention Response Team has responded to over 14,000 CIT calls for service and filed over 4,600 emergency detention orders. Only less than 1% of all crisis situations have resulted in an unavoidable arrest.



Houston Mayor Annise Parker at the news conference to announce the collaboration of the Houston Police Department, Mental Health Mental Retardation Authority of Harris County and Harris County Sheriff's Office in the formation of the city/county Crisis Intervention Response Team. Behind the mayor are the members of the Houston Police Department and the Harris County Sheriff's Department Mental Health Units and representatives of MHMRA. Also in attendance were Harris County Judge Ed Emmett (not pictured) and Harris County Sheriff Adrian Garcia (standing behind Mayor Parker).



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# Houston Very Active at International CIT Conference

The Crisis Intervention Team International 2011 Conference was held in Virginia Beach, Virginia September 12-14. Houston gave five presentations and Houston's nominee was named Consumer of the Year.



**LEFT** (standing left to right) Lieutenant Robert Henry, of the Harris County Sheriff's Office Mental Health Unit and Lieutenant Mike Lee, manager of Houston's Mental Health Unit, gave a workshop titled "Corrections and CIT." Jails and prisons have become the new asylums of the 21st century with over 500,000 mentally ill in the prison system nationally and only 50,000 in state mental hospitals. The Harris County Jail is the third largest jail system in the nation and the largest mental health institution in Texas, with an average of 2,400 inmates on psychotropic medications on any given day. The Harris County Jail has a model program for treating the mentally ill in the jail.

**RIGHT** Senior Officer Frank Webb gave two presentations: "CIT Media: Websites, Newsletters, Brochures and More" and "Critical Incident Response to Today's Returning Veterans." In the first presentation, Officer Webb showed the attendee's the Department's CIT Website via the internet and passed out copies of the Mental Health Unit's newsletter and brochures. Officer Webb taught the second workshop with an Iraq war veteran, Mr. Jeremy Williams. The focus of the class was Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Mr. Williams is a retired marine who suffers from PTSD due to his three deployments to Iraq.



**ABOVE** (left to right) Officer Rebecca Skillern, Houston Police Department; Jeanne Miller, Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms; and Sergeant Marco Loera, Houston Police Department. The panel discussed the challenges faced in Houston and throughout the County in dealing with people in serious mental health crises who also possess a firearm. Case studies were presented along with an explanation of the federal prohibitors for purchasing firearms.



**ABOVE** Mr. Jack Callahan received the 2011 Consumer of the Year Award. Jack has been working with the Houston Police Department since 1994 giving his consumer presentation during Houston's CIT classes. Jack goes across the state giving his presentation and advocating for individuals with mental illness. His presentation does more to change officers' attitudes toward mental illness than any other module in the class.

# Houston Provides Training to Texas Agencies Through Department of Justice

Houston was one of six police departments across the nation selected as a training site for specialized policing responses for responding to the mentally ill. The six departments selected are considered the leaders in the country for these programs. The other five departments selected are: Los Angeles, California; Madison, Wisconsin; Portland, Maine; Salt Lake City, Utah; and the University of Florida Police Department.

The Department of Justice provides funding to the learning sites to help them train other law enforcement agencies. Houston recently provided three 40-hour CIT classes in Texas: Conroe, San Marcos and Sonora. A fourth class was taught in New Braunfels October 10-14, 2011. A fifth class is scheduled for Laredo in early December.



## New Braunfels

The New Braunfels Police Department hosted the training which was held at the New Braunfels Fire Department Training Facility. Twenty-three officers from the following agencies attended: New Braunfels Police Department, Comal County Sheriff's Office, Texas Department of



Students attending the New Braunfels training in October. Twenty-three officers from five regional law enforcement agencies attended the training.

Parks and Wildlife, Burlison County Sheriff's Office, and the Seguin Police Department.

The training was evaluated very high, with the role plays evaluated the highest. Many questions were asked involving the Texas Mental Health Code and procedures for obtaining an Emergency Detention Order. Many of the agencies in the New Braunfels area have to travel long distances to a receiving facility and have to wait with the consumer if he/she is violent.



Three members of the San Antonio Police Department's Mental Health Unit went to New Braunfels to help with the role plays for the 40-hour CIT class. The personnel are (left to right) Officer Joe Smarro, Officer Rebecca Skillern, Officer Ned Bandoske, Officer Frank Webb, and Sergeant Romana Lopez.

# Houston Mental Health Unit Invited to Present at 2011 Problem Oriented Policing Conference

The Center for Problem-Oriented-Policing (POP) recognizes “innovative and effective problem-oriented policing projects that have achieved measurable success in resolving recurring specific crime, disorder or public safety problems faced by police and the community.” Each year, the center accepts applications from law enforcement agencies around the world for the prestigious Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing. The Houston Police Department’s Chronic Consumer Stabilization Initiative (CCSI) was one of six finalist programs in 2010, won the International Association of Chiefs of Police Community Policing Award in 2010 and was the recipient of the 2011 Simmons Foundation grant (\$25,000). Houston was invited to present on its CCSI program during the 2011 POP conference in Miami, Florida.

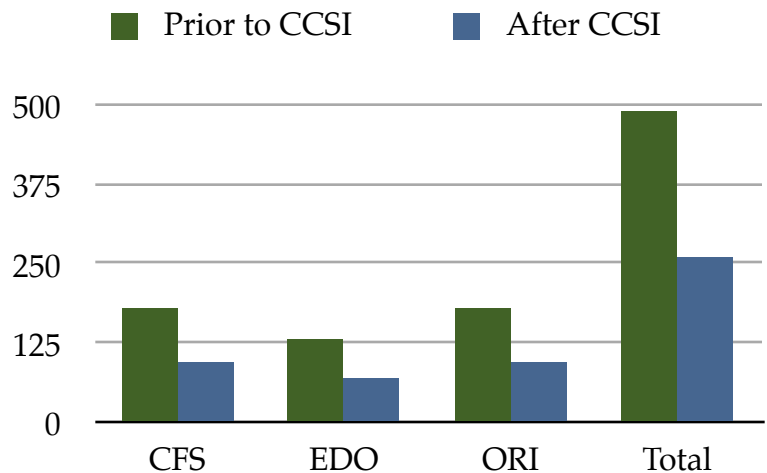
Houston’s CCSI program is a collaborative effort between the Houston Police Department and the Mental Health Mental Retardation Authority (MHMRA) of Harris County. This is a proactive program targeted at the most serious mentally ill in Houston. Rather than continually having police respond to these individuals, the program attempts to break the cycle of crisis through intensive case management and thus reduce/eliminate future interactions with the police.

The Mental Health Unit liaison officer identifies the most chronically mentally ill consumers the police department responds to repeatedly. Two case workers from MHMRA work with these individuals to help keep them out of crisis. The case workers look at housing needs, mental and physical health needs, substance abuse issues, guardianship, social security benefits, and assists consumers in getting needs met.

The following graph depicts the effectiveness of the program. The numbers “prior to CCSI” reflect activity for 30 consumers for the six-month period prior to being placed on the program. The numbers “after CCSI” reflect the activity for these same individuals during the six month pilot program. There was an approximate 70% decrease in overall events reported to the police department during the pilot. Total monthly calls-for-

service (CFS), emergency detention orders (EDO), and offense reports (ORI) decreased by 70%.

## CCSI Results During Pilot Program



Recent revisions to the program include the following:

- increased client capacity from 30 to 40 with \$25,000 grant from the Simmons Foundation - funding is used to hire a third case manager (part-time)
- implementation of HelpLine Outreach Engagement Program (HOEP) which works with MHMRA’s 24/7 helpline to transition more stable CCSI clients from intensive case management to phone monitoring
- Medic Alert Bracelet Program that relays vital information to first responders about a consumer’s medical or psychiatric history
- allows clients to be actively involved with creating and modifying their treatment plan
- the addition of the Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) program model - an effort to increase treatment compliance through the civil court process

# Bill Balleza Volunteers to Narrate Documentary on PTSD

Bill Balleza, anchor of KPRC Local 2 news, volunteered to narrate a documentary on Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) that is being used in mandatory in-service training for officers and supervisors. The video has been requested by law enforcement agencies and mental health professionals across the country. It is a very compelling and professional video thanks to the narration of Mr. Balleza and the hard work of some very special and dedicated people at Houston Television, who produced the video, which is receiving national acclaim.

Mr. Balleza spent three years in the Marine Corps, joining in 1966. He shot expert in boot camp, went to sniper school, made sergeant and spent 13 months in Vietnam, where he served as a scout/sniper. Mr. Balleza is very supportive of the military and volunteers to help military causes.

Mr. Balleza was videotaped outside the Police Memorial on a very hot and humid August evening. Although it was uncomfortable, Mr. Balleza never complained. His last statement to us was "Just let me know if you need anything else."

The video depicts two Houston police officers and one marine, who has no affiliation to the Houston Police Department. All three have PTSD and each courageously tells his/her story with PTSD.

A primary objective of the video is to send the message to officers to seek help if they believe they may be experiencing symptoms of PTSD. Too many officers do not seek help, partly due to the stigma of mental illness, and instead self-medicate with alcohol which can lead to problems with their families and their jobs.



(left to right) Cheri Pressley, Houston Television, Producer; Bill Balleza; Al Byers, Houston Television, chief engineer; Mariana Oyanguren, Houston Television, Cable Access Program Supervisor; Senior Officer Frank Webb.



# Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) - It's Not What You Think!

## Good Old Fashioned Police Work

"These people are like ghosts, we can't find them." This is a statement by Sergeant E. B. Cisneros of the Homicide Division. He was referring to suspects in a homicide case who were homeless. A male was found murdered in Buffalo Bayou underneath Congress Bridge. This was a particularly heinous crime with the victim stabbed, shot and drowned.

The members of HOT - Officers Jaime Giraldo and Janice Terry and Sergeant Steve Wick - met with Sergeant Cisneros and received a packet with information on the suspects. One of the suspects was apprehended in Allen's Landing by HOT within 20 minutes of receiving the information! Homicide investigators were able to get a confession that night.

Three days later, Sergeant Wick and Officer Giraldo went to the Beacon in an attempt to locate a second suspect in the case. Volunteers and officers working at the Beacon were asked to call if the suspect showed up. Approximately 30 minutes later Officer Giraldo received a call from an extra-job officer who said he had the suspect detained. HOT went to the location and placed the second suspect under arrest. Homicide detectives went to the scene and took custody of the suspect who confessed later that night.

Six days later, a third suspect was arrested and confessed. All three suspects were charged with Capital Murder and are awaiting trial.

HOT has become a valuable resource to investigative divisions within the Houston Police Department, to other law enforcement agencies in the area and to the District Attorney's Office.

## Making a Difference

In addition to crime fighting, HOT is making a huge difference in the lives of some of those less fortunate than us. One example is a 60-year-old homeless man from Michigan who was living under the bridge at Allen's Landing. He had no family, had been homeless for over



(left to right) Members of the Houston Police Department Homeless Outreach Team (HOT): Officer Jaime Giraldo, Officer Janice Terry and Sergeant Steve Wick.

10 years, and was in very poor physical condition. The temperature at the time was in the teens at night.

HOT got this person into housing three weeks after coming into contact with him. They bought him a small television out of their own money and brought him for medical attention. Unfortunately, this person was diagnosed with three forms of cancer and died six months later. Those six months in his one-room apartment were some of the happiest of this man's life; he was happy, content and comfortable. Without the outreach of HOT, this man would have died alone under that bridge.

A second example of HOT's outreach is a married couple in their late 20's also living under a bridge. The husband had severe epilepsy and could not work. HOT got them into an apartment, took the husband for medical treatment and helped the wife get a job at Reliant Stadium.

The husband's seizures were so bad, he would have black and blue bruises after a seizure. Ironically, he was denied social security benefits. HOT is working to help him get those much needed and deserved benefits.

## Denver Police Department Visits HPD to Study Programs for Responding to the Mentally Ill



(left to right) Officer Rebecca Skillern, Mental Health Unit; Officer Susan Gann, Denver Police Department Mental Health Unit; Executive Assistant Chief T. N. Oettmeier, Support Operations; Sergeant Betty Hale, Denver Police Department Mental Health Unit; Senior Officer Frank Webb, Mental Health Unit.