



Campus Cops Corner

-Public Safety Tips for the PPCC Community-

Public Safety Newsletter

As members of the Department of Public Safety, the Campus Police are very much focused on providing a safe and orderly environment in which staff, students and faculty can work, learn and teach. The concept of an "orderly environment" has been the focus of American law enforcement for about 30 years. The term and concept of "community oriented policing" begins with the desire for an orderly community.

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Orderly Environment & "Broken Windows"

In the March 1982 issue of "The Atlantic Monthly Journal," criminologists George L. Kelling and James Q. Wilson first espoused a theory commonly referred to as "Broken Windows" (cut n' paste this URL into your browser for the article in its entirety: <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1982/03/broken-windows/4465/>). They maintained that "the fear of crime" affected the community's "quality of life," as much, if not more, than the amount of actual crime in that community. They learned that "public disorder" (i.e., the presence of graffiti, trash, "...disreputable or obstreperous or unpredictable people: panhandlers, drunks, addicts, rowdy teenagers, prostitutes, loiterers, the mentally disturbed") made people feel unsafe no matter what the actual crime statistics in that neighborhood. The presence of "Broken Windows" signaled that "no one cares," and that misbehavior is tolerated.

Our own Dean of Students, Ms. Jennifer Sengenberger, recently shared an article with me which continues to corroborate the "Broken Windows Theory." The article, published in the February 9, 2012, Law and Policy Report of "The Association for Student Conduct Administration," focuses on an experiment where innocuous flyers were placed on bicycles throughout two neighborhoods. The flyers had to be removed before the bicyclists could be on their way. All trash cans had been removed from the immediate vicinity forcing the bicyclists into one of two options: Throw it onto the ground or take it with them until they could find a trash can. Both neighborhoods bore a prominent sign prohibiting graffiti, but in one neighborhood, vandals had sprayed "graffiti over the sign" and throughout the area. The other area was left pristine. The researchers learned that the bicyclists in the graffiti covered area threw the flyers onto the ground at twice the rate of of the bicyclists in the pristine area. Author Steven Pinker wrote "[A]n orderly environment fosters a sense of responsibility not so much by deterrence ... as by the signaling of a social norm: This is the kind of place where people obey the rules."

This applies to us at PPCC in that we are "signaling our norms" by what we tolerate. Did you see that large piece of trash blowing in the parking lot? Did you pick it up, or did you ignore it? Did you ignore the boisterous language in the hallway, or did you address it? Even if you don't feel comfortable addressing the matter yourself, did you refer the matter to someone who could? Did you do so immediately? If we recognize the minor issues of "disorderly conduct" as "boundary testing," we can see where our tolerance of it invites larger and more serious transgressions.

I encourage you to call the Campus Police at 502-2911 anytime you see things which signal "disorder" and "no one cares." I'm confident that's not the message we wish to send here.

Important Numbers & websites:

- 24-7 Emergency Number: 502-2911
- Emergency Alert Sign Up: www.ppcc.edu/alert
- Crime Stoppers
634-STOP (7867)
- Anonymous Reporting
www.SAFE2TELL.org

1-877-542-7233