

Team policing...

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Miller said there was some competition between teams, but said this was not a problem.

"Police officers have a lot of ego and a little macho and are kind of aggressive. They'll compete as quickly as anyone, but they don't go for quotas. They try to make the biggest impact on crime, not write the most tickets," he said.

Ragatz said there was little jealousy within the team. "We expected some petty jealousies, but we haven't had that, or else it's been very slight," he said.

Miller said another problem is that not enough men are on the force to get the amount of community involvement he wants.

"WE WANT a 50-50 ratio and right now it's more like 60-40," Miller said. He added that more men are in training and the force should be up to strength in the spring.

Curtis said he could use more people on the team, but said he felt this was true no matter what system the department was operating under.

"It's getting to the place where 230 people aren't quite enough to cover Lincoln," he said. He added that team policing spreads the available officers further.

"More people are working on the street now than ever before. Not one officer is on inside duty. There used to be a lot of them," he said.

Ragatz said he faces a manpower shortage if too many people call in sick, but noted this means limiting his men to answering calls. The force works on a priority system, he stressed, and special programs would be cancelled to keep men on the beat.

Miller said team captains work 40 hours a week but are responsible for the area all the time. He said the men have been working quite well under the system, but added the job puts a great deal of pressure on them.

RAGATZ SAID he was under stress because of the responsibility.

"You can take it home with you, even though you'd like to leave it behind," he said. "It feels a little like being the police chief."

Curtis said he felt like he was always on call. He estimated he receives four or five calls a night on his time off and often drops in at the station to see what has been happening.

"It could have a tendency to burn you out," Curtis said. "I haven't yet, since there's a lot of excitement with the new system. I don't see myself here 10 years from now, however."

Curtis said the new system helps the force and the community in many ways.

"It makes us effective. Efficiency is doing a job well, but effectiveness is doing the right job well," he said. "Now we're doing the right job effectively. We may not be totally efficient, but I will give up some efficiency to get effectiveness."

RAGATZ SAID he originally had doubts about team policing since it has failed in several other towns, but said the system works in Lincoln.

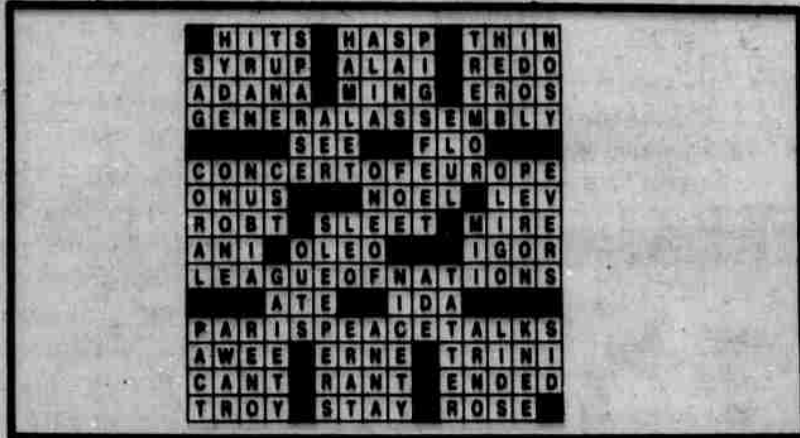
"The biggest advantage is that it made us quit driving around and go meet the public. At first I didn't think that was important, but you need to get out and get involved to be effective," he said.

Ragatz said the system has a place for every type of cop.

"Those that are the type that like to give speeches can go ahead and do those things. Others that aren't comfortable there can handle service calls and other problems. There's room for everyone," he said.

Curtis said team policing provided officers with diversity and more opportunity to feel like they were a part of the community.

"You feel more alive, like you're doing something," he said. "You can't just leave it behind and go home at the end of the day. Where's the fun, the sense of accomplishment in that? This way, we're all working for something better."



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