

International Volunteers Share a Universal Commitment to Public Safety

The Volunteers in Police Service Program Directory boasts volunteer programs from around the world. The roles, responsibilities, and titles for volunteers vary from country to country, but they all share a similar commitment to keeping their communities safe. This issue of *VIPS in Focus* examines some of the similarities and unique features of international law enforcement volunteer programs.

Metropolitan Police Service London, England, United Kingdom

London is the largest city in the United Kingdom, and, with more than 7.2 million residents, it is the largest municipality in the European Union. It is one of world's top financial centers and well known for its strength in art, commerce, education, and tourism. The city has a diverse population with more than 300 languages spoken by residents. London's Metropolitan Police Service (the Met) employs more than 31,000 officers as well as 13,000 police staff and 3,700 Police Community Support Officers.

Given London's duties as host of the 2012 Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games, Britain has been steadily expanding its law enforcement volunteer programs to meet public safety needs.

Since Sir Robert Peel revolutionized the field of policing in the early 1800's, London has often been at the forefront of advances in policing. Special Constables, often referred to as "Specials," have been around since those early days of modern policing. These volunteer officers perform many of the same roles and functions that Reserve or Auxiliary Officers perform in the United States. Special constables wear the same uniform and have the same powers and responsibilities as career officers. Specials patrol in pairs with another volunteer or a career officer. Neither Specials nor career officers carry firearms while on duty. Specials respond to 9-9-9 calls for service, which are similar to our 9-1-1 emergency calls. Calls may relate to robberies, fights, traffic accidents, criminal damage, or missing persons. Specials are also an important part of the Safer Neighborhoods program, London's community-



Met Police
Volunteers
at the 2013
Olympic
and
Paralympic
Games



oriented policing program. Through Safer Neighborhood Teams, Specials work with community members to build relationships and address local policing priorities.

To become a Special, an individual must pass a written examination, interview, physical fitness test, and medical examination. There are currently 6,000 Specials working with the Met, but they are looking to increase their numbers to 10,000 in the coming years.

In 2001, the Met began using non-uniformed, civilian volunteers. Today there are 1,500 volunteers supporting all 32 London boroughs. They are a diverse group with volunteers from many different cultures. Differing somewhat from typical U.S. police volunteer demographics, 60 percent of the Met's volunteers are female and 40 percent are under the age of 40. The program values local knowledge and requires that all volunteers live, work, or go to school in the borough in which they volunteer. They are also required to have lived in the United Kingdom for at least three years prior to volunteering. Volunteers are issued a lanyard and identification badge, but they do not wear uniforms.

There is one overall manager for the entire Met Police Volunteers Program. Each borough has a

volunteer coordinator who manages volunteers day to day and decides what activities they will support. Volunteers are limited to working 60 hours per month to make it clear that volunteers are not a replacement for staff.

Front desk support is one of the primary volunteer functions, with 700 volunteers providing support at local stations. They perform triage functions to greet visitors and assess their needs, so that paid front counter staff can focus on their core duties. Met volunteers focus on a wide variety of other projects as well including press office support, customer service surveys, role playing for police trainings, and more.

Volunteers play an important part in implementing the Police Commissioner's Total Victim Care Agenda by making Quality Call Backs to victims of crime. Volunteers have made hundreds of calls to collect quantitative and qualitative data about victims' experiences with the police while also providing the victims with a listening ear. Other volunteers attend training to create videos and images from surveillance footage. They regularly use these skills to collect video for court cases and investigations.

There is no budget for volunteer recognition, but volunteer coordinators find that the community is often willing to open their doors and provide incentives for the volunteers. Recent events have included trips to a crime museum, a local cricket club, and the London Eye. The Volunteer of the Year award is presented at an annual banquet at the Royal Albert Hall.

New South Wales Police Force

New South Wales, Australia

New South Wales (NSW) is the most populous state in Australia, with a population of more than 7.25 million people. New South Wales includes the Sydney metropolitan area and a diverse geography of agricultural areas, mountain regions, and coastal beaches. In 2012, the New South Wales Police Force celebrated its 150th anniversary of protecting and serving the state's residents. There are currently 15,617 sworn and 3,901 civilian staff.

The New South Wales Police Force began its Volunteers in Policing (VIP) program in 1995. The program is currently operating in 80 locations in the state of New South Wales, with more than 500 volunteers supporting their local police.

The VIP Program State Manager oversees operations and record keeping of the program. VIPs are supervised at the local level by Crime Prevention Officers, generally senior constables, or Inspectors who have responsibility for the Customer Service Portfolio.

Volunteers must fill out an application, undergo a police records and fingerprint check, and sign a confidentiality agreement. All volunteers must be citizens or permanent residents of Australia. NSW Police Force offers volunteer insurance that provides the same workers' compensation coverage as paid employees receive. To qualify for coverage, volunteers must be on duty with the VIP Program at the time of the incident and

must not be engaged in any illegal activity. All volunteers are provided with a VIP shirt and photo identification. Volunteers generally work a maximum of 16 hours per week, with the exception of emergency or disaster situations.

All VIPs complete a one-day orientation, followed by on-the-job training. The orientation is typically given by the Education Officer at the volunteer's Local Area Command or in a group session by the VIP Program State Manager. The orientation is also offered as a distance education model for VIPs in remote areas. The orientation course introduces volunteers to the structure, mission, and history of the NSW Police Force and the VIP program. Volunteers also learn about customer service, effective communication, and VIP administrative issues such as record keeping and uniform requirements. The course is accredited by the NSW Police Force Education and Training Command and undergoes a review every three years.

Many volunteers assist the NSW Police Force in Local Area Commands around the state, which are similar to local police stations in the United States. Volunteers provide customer assistance, take minutes at meetings, and help with other administrative tasks. Volunteers also provide support to the Air Wing, Mounted Police, Operational Skills (Bicycle Unit), Missing Persons, Marine Area Command, and Security Management Units.

Many volunteer activities focus on providing additional services to NSW residents. VIPs regularly staff an office at Westmead Hospital to provide support and resources to parents and families. Volunteers also provide support to



victims and witnesses of crime by attending court hearings and helping them understand the trial process. VIPs participate in a variety of crime prevention activities, including safety audits, VIN engraving campaigns, and distribution of crime prevention information at local schools, shopping centers, parking lots, and residential areas.

Outside of their normal duties, VIPs offer support for large special events. Past events include the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation conference, World Youth Day, Police and Emergency Services sporting games, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, and the NSW Police Force 150th Anniversary Expo.

Each year, the NSW Police Force presents a VIP of Year Award in Customer Service Excellence. The 2012 award winner was a 40 year veteran of the Force who came on as a VIP in retirement. In his volunteer capacity, he continues his work with the NSW Police Force Mounted Unit. He assists with the choreography of the Mounted Unit's musical ride, which is performed each year at the Sydney Royal Easter Show and other special events.



New South Wales VIP volunteers

Vancouver Police Department **British Columbia, Canada**

Vancouver is a seaport city on the western coast of British Columbia. The city is known for forestry, tourism, and film production. With more than 600,000 people, Vancouver is one of Canada's most densely populated cities. The Vancouver Police Department (VPD) has more than 1,700 sworn and civilian staff members.

Vancouver's Citizens Crime Watch Program (CCW) began in 1986 as a pilot project and has grown to include more than 100 volunteers. Crime Watch volunteers provide the police with extra eyes and ears on city streets on Friday and Saturday nights. They patrol in pairs of two using their own vehicles. Geographical assignments for volunteer patrols are based on crime analysis information and projections, as well as requests from various police units. Volunteers pay special attention to neighborhoods that are experiencing a rash of vandalism or break and enters. Volunteers never actively engage in a situation. If volunteers witness an event that requires police presence, such as a purse snatching or theft from an auto, they radio to the CCW Coordinator, a permanently assigned police officer who oversees the program and is on duty while volunteers patrol. Depending on the incidents called in, the CCW Coordinator will organize the necessary police response. Crime Watch volunteers also monitor for stolen vehicles. Using a laptop with a database of stolen vehicles, volunteers check abandoned vehicles for matches. Since 1993, CCW has recovered more than 4,200 stolen vehicles.

Crime Watch volunteers go through an extensive recruiting and vetting process similar to that of prospective officers. The Crime Watch Coordinator estimates that 75 percent of volunteers have aspirations of becoming a police officer one day. The recruiting process begins with a person's email expressing interest in the program. From how they write the email and how they address and express their interest in becoming a volunteer in the unit, the coordinator begins an initial evaluation of the prospective volunteer's level of maturity, command of the English language, writing skills, and their suitability for the unit. There is a formal application which is followed by a background check, driving record review, and interview with the program coordinator. Successful applicants then complete a three-hour orientation on policies, procedures, police terminology, and the process for conducting static and mobile observations. After the orientation, candidates participate in five patrol shifts as an observer before being cleared to patrol in teams of two.

Vancouver has 10 Community Policing Centres, eight of which are non-profit organizations operated by autonomous boards of directors, with two operated by the VPD. Funding for the CPCs comes from the City of Vancouver and other donations. Community programming and volunteer roles vary by the needs of each neighborhood. Typical office duties for volunteers include: answering phone calls; taking reports from victims, residents, and tourists; referring public inquiries to the appropriate agency; and maintaining crime statistics. Volunteers also participate in Foot and Bike Patrols throughout the community. In several

Centres, they recently introduced a Pooch Patrol through which dog owners are trained to keep an eye out for and report suspicious activity, vandalism, graffiti, abandoned cars, and other things they might encounter on regular walks with their pets. Volunteers in all Centres often assist with traffic and crowd control for parades, street closures, and special events. The Vancouver Aboriginal and Chinese Community Policing Centres offer volunteers the opportunity to develop or facilitate cross-cultural workshops for VPD and workshops about safety and law enforcement issues for community members.

In March 2012, the Vancouver Police Department turned to volunteers to help with a large scale effort to distribute information regarding the riots following the Stanley Cup on June 15, 2011. VPD's Integrated Riot Investigation Unit created a poster featuring the 100 suspects most wanted in connection with acts of violence, looting, and vandalism carried out during the riots. More than 300 volunteers helped VPD to distribute 70,000 posters to transit hubs, schools, malls, and other locations throughout the Metropolitan Vancouver area.



For More Information:*London Metropolitan Police Service*

Darren Sheridan

Head of Met Volunteers

Phone: 07920577030

Email: darren.sheridan@met.police.uk

Website: www.metpolicecareers.co.uk

New South Wales Police Service

Inspector Stephen Henkel

VIPS State Coordinator

Phone: 61 2 88359545

Email: henk1ste@police.nsw.gov.au

Website: www.police.nsw.gov.au

Toronto Police Department

Constable Oscar F. Alvarez

Citizens Crime Watch Coordinator

Phone: 604-717-2909

Email: oscar.alvarez@vpd.ca

Website: www.vancouver.ca/police

VIPS Products and Resources:**VIPS Program Directory**

Law enforcement agencies can register their volunteer programs and search for others with the online VIPS program directory. Citizens also can locate volunteer opportunities with law enforcement agencies in their communities. The directory allows users to search by zip code, state, key word, and type of program.

VIPS to VIPS

VIPS to VIPS is a moderated discussion group that allows members to post questions and share information with law enforcement volunteer managers from around the world. Participation in VIPS to VIPS is limited to contacts from programs registered with the national VIPS programs.

IACP International Policing Division

The IACP International Policing Division works with the international policing community to offer opportunities for networking, exchanging ideas, capitalizing on lessons learned, and furthering professional growth.

<http://www.theiacp.org/>

About/Governance/Divisions/

InternationalPolicing/tabid/461/Default.

aspx

The Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS) Program works to enhance the capacity of state and local law enforcement to utilize volunteers. VIPS serves as a gateway to resources and information for and about law enforcement volunteer programs. The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) manages the VIPS Program in partnership with and on behalf of the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.



This project was supported by Award No. 2010-DJ-BX-K045 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Office for Victims of Crime. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not represent the official position or policies of the United States Department of Justice.