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CCMTA - Police Partnership Award - Nominee: Sgt. Gary CLARKE, Reg. #34752

Introduction

Sergeant Gary Clarke (Sgt. Clarke), is a regular member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police who is assigned to The City of Burnaby's RCMP Traffic Section as the Operations NCO. With thirty-three years of service in the RCMP, Sgt. Clarke has spent more than twenty-eight years in traffic services, eighteen of those in service to the City of Burnaby. As such, Sgt Clarke has dedicated the majority of his service to the City of Burnaby's road safety. Sgt. Clarke has demonstrated his dedication through leadership, enforcement, public awareness, education, and improving communications with public and other agencies (which focus on highway transportation safety).

In the examples provided in this report, Sgt. Clarke not only completed all the tasks without any problems but also demonstrated his leadership and communication skills. As this report shows, Sgt. Clarke's work on this project is an example of Sgt Clarke's ongoing work in road safety initiatives. In this nomination letter, we are going to name a few accomplishments, such as, involvement with the speed reader board and with the community.

Circumstances which surround the Speed-Reader Board Project

One of the areas in Burnaby, B.C. for high speed collisions is Gaglardi Way, a main feeder route from Simon Fraser University (SFU) to the Highway #1. According to the data that was provided by Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC), Gaglardi Way between Broadway and Mountain Pky, was a high collision area. This area had 88 motor vehicle incidents between 2006-2010 which resulted in property damage, injuries or fatalities.

Approximately 20,000 vehicles use Gaglardi Way on a typical weekday. Gaglardi Way is comprised of four lanes of traffic, two lanes in each direction (north/south bound). Lanes are undivided until they reach to the bottom of the hill which is situated close to the intersections of Broadway. The total distance for Gaglardi Way between Broadway and Mountain Pky is approximately 2.7 kilometers. Gaglardi Way has a continuous grade of approximate 10%. The road is wide, and both sides are lined with trees and bushes. The posted speed limit there is

60km/h. Speeding is an ongoing problem for the above area. City maintenance crews often attend to repair the damage to the cement no-posts (separating oncoming traffic) in the center median right at the bottom of the hill due to vehicular impacts. Doug Louie, Asst. Director of Engineering for the City of Burnaby, also agreed that the road type and vehicle speed are principal causation factors in the collisions in that area.

Building Partnerships

The Burnaby RCMP Traffic Section has been aware of the situation for several years, and strives to make that road safer within their enforcement capacity. Sgt. Clarke always encouraged traffic members to conduct speed enforcement in this area more often. Sgt. Clarke believed more could be done to decrease the collisions. To do so, Sgt. Clarke started to work on the project, and built partnerships with the Engineering Department of the City of Burnaby and Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC).

Challenges

Gord Couling, a Regional Coordinator for ICBC, is always working to reduce collision numbers in British Columbia, and has been a long time friend of Sgt. Clarke in road safety initiatives. Mr. Couling offered to work with the project. Mr. Couling persuaded ICBC to agree to provide financial assistance to fund the speed-reader board project in Burnaby. Doug Louie, Director of Engineering with the City of Burnaby, was planning to get one installed in Burnaby. Mr. Couling and Mr. Louie were on the same page but needed more guidance to select the best location for a speed-reader board installation.

The challenge for ICBC in providing funding for the speed-reader board project was that they needed it to be installed in a high collision area. ICBC needed to have statistics and expert opinion to support the funding. On the other side, City of Burnaby had difficulty providing funding, but knew Gaglardi Way was an ongoing problem. They too were looking for an expert opinion.

Sgt. Clarke had a long term good relationship with both ICBC and City of Burnaby. Sgt. Clarke agreed to act in an advisory capacity for the project. Sgt. Clarke gathered all the statistics in Burnaby, found out which area had the most number of collisions, and where police got the most complaints from. Sgt. Clarke pin pointed the location to install the speed-reader board and vehicle pull-outs on Gaglardi Way.

Mr. Couling, when consulted on Sgt. Clarke's nomination, described Sgt. Clarke as the "key component" and Mr. Louie agreed. Sgt. Clarke was a "good fit" for this project. Sgt. Clarke was the catalyst in bringing the interested parties together. Both parties agreed that without Sgt. Clarke's support on this project and professional advice, the speed-reader board installation, and enforcement pull-out, would not have been built.

This project encountered some problems. Sgt. Clarke suggested to have one speed-reader board and pull-outs on each side. However, due to environmental challenges, they could only build one on the west side of the road adjacent to the southbound (downhill) travel lanes.

Evaluation

After the speed-reader was installed and activated, Sgt. Clarke monitored it very closely with City of Burnaby and ICBC. They were sharing data and information and tried to use the speed-reader board in the optimal level. On April 19, 2011, the speed-reader board was officially activated. Sgt. Clarke attended to Gaglardi Way to celebrate the installation of the speed-reader board and shared his support of the partnership with City of Burnaby, ICBC, Burnaby City Council members, Traffic Safety Committee members, and the SFU traffic and safety enforcement team.

The City of Burnaby staged a media release for the celebration of the first speed-reader board installed in Burnaby. According to the news release from Burnaby, Councillor Pietro Calendino, chair of the City of Burnaby's Community Policing Committee says, "we are committed to improving the safety of motorists in Burnaby". However, he believed that in order to have the optimal success, continued partnerships with Speed Watch, SFU traffic and safety enforcement team, volunteers from the Lougheed CPO, and the RCMP.

The City of Burnaby conducted research using the speed-reader board. They gathered information using two methods. In Spring 2011, the speed-reader board was installed with the screen turned off, while still recording the speed of motorists. Soon after a waiting period of one month in 'silent mode', the speed-reader board was fully function which showed motorist's speed. As a result of data gathered from the 'silent running' mode, the data showed an average speed of between 90-96km/h. After the speed-reader board was fully activated, statistics showed driver's average speed diminished to between 72-86km/h.

Result

In summary, there was an average reduction of 14 km/h between the two collection periods, reflecting the effectiveness of the speed-reader board. Since the installation, the feedback has been all positive. Julie Stewart, Patrol Operations Coordinator of the SFU campus, advised that the speed-reader board has been very effective, and has noticed that drivers were decreasing the speed. She believes drivers are more conscious about their speed based for two reasons. First, she has seen more police officers conducting enforcement in that area due to the pullout area set up in the area of the speed reader board. Secondly, even without the presence of law enforcement the speed-reader board gets a lot of attention from drivers. Julie has heard only positive feedback in the SFU campus community regarding the police presence and the usage of the speed-reader board.

Corporal SKOLROOD, who is in charge of the traffic community complaints at Burnaby Detachment, has not received any speed complaints in regards to Gaglardi Way since the installation of the speed reader board. From a police perspective, the speed-reader board is a great road safety tool because it has the flexibility of not having police presence yet still reducing the speed of drivers on this roadway.

Prior to the speed-reader board being installed, there were two fatal collisions on Gaglardi Way within five months. Both tragedies were speed related. Since the installation of the speed-reader board, there have been no serious injuries or fatal collisions reported.

Enhancing Enforcement

Even though Sgt. Clarke is the Operations NCO for the traffic section, he still conducts enforcement in the high collision areas, such as Gaglardi Way. S/Sgt. Mulvihill was Sgt. Clarke's immediate supervisor at the time of this project. S/Sgt. Mulvihill described Sgt. Clarke as "an invaluable asset to Burnaby Traffic Team. He is very enthusiastic about his work and he likes to share his experience with members. Sgt. Clarke is a very responsible traffic member. He not only issues violation tickets to drivers under the Motor Vehicle Act, but also educates the driver by explaining the consequences of inappropriate driving behavior. Sgt. Clarke always shows respect and professionalism to the drivers and he tries to raise public awareness at the same time."

Partnerships with Other Agencies

Other examples of Sgt Clarke's ongoing partnerships with other agencies in the community are:

- a project targeting pedestrian jay-walkers in the area of Metropolis, the largest shopping mall in mall in western Canada;
- co-ordinating ongoing projects between Speed Watch volunteers, the Integrated Road Safety [Enforcement] Unit, and members of the Burnaby Traffic Section.

According to Gord Couling, Regional Coordinator of ICBC, Sgt. Clarke is "always ready to help" with ICBC's annual campaigns to combat impaired driving, aggressive driving, intersection safety, pedestrian safety, distracted driving, occupant restraints, and auto crime.

According to Mr Couling, Sgt. Clarke "regularly helps" with planning of regular Counter Attack sessions throughout the year in Burnaby. Also, Sgt. Clarke has supported high-profile BC provincial government/ ICBC media launches for two separate Provincial Counter-Attack impaired driving campaigns. Sgt Clarke has also participated in numerous ICBC speeding and High Risk Driving awareness projects along Hastings Street and the Barnet Highway in Burnaby. Moreover, Sgt. Clarke supports Speed Watch volunteers working out of the four different community police offices in Burnaby.

Events Preparation

One of the strongest assets that Sgt. Clarke has is his expertise in collaborative project work with community partners throughout the year. Sgt Clarke has taken the lead on organizing the following events in the past year:

- The Rick Hansen 25th Anniversary Relay for 2012. It is a fund raising campaign for the Rick Hansen Foundation. Sgt. Clarke was very supportive of this cross-Canada journey and drafted the operation plans for it's travel through the City of Burnaby, and in doing so and he liaised with other agencies;
- The "Hats Off Day" is a street festival, an annual community event in Burnaby, B.C. Burnaby Now readers have been voted for Hats Off Day is "Burnaby's Best Festival" every year since 2005. Hats Off Day is when the Burnaby Heights Merchants Association celebrate their success together with their customers and the community. Sgt. Clarke was the on-site traffic commander who managed (with the City of Burnaby) an extensive road closure in a city environment, in order to to block off traffic from the street festival;
- The Nagar Kirtan Parade is the Sikh community celebration. The Sikh community in South Burnaby conducts an annual parade for their followers, and it requires traffic management for a 'rolling', evolving, parade route. Sgt. Clarke has organized and assisted City of Burnaby with this multi-cultural event annually;
- The "Ride for Dad" is a motorcycle benefit ride that commences in Burnaby, B.C. Sgt Clarke has for the past two years been the site commander;
- The "Lower Mainland Christmas Bureau Annual Toy Run" is a motorcycle benefit for underprivileged children. Sgt. Clarke has been the site commander for more than six years.

For each event, Sgt. Clarke worked with the event organizers and worked out with a plan that could let the events run safely within the designated areas. Sgt. Clarke works to ensure a minimal impact of other road users who are not participating in the event. Sgt. Clarke shows a dedication and a passion when working with community partners, working to ensure road safety priorities are not overlooked. Road safety is Sgt. Clarke's primary concern. All of the events that Sgt. Clarke prepared, organized and assisted, there were no major incidents or complaints. Sgt. Clarke has great partnerships with traffic members, volunteers, organizers and other private and government sector agencies, which made the events enjoyable for everyone.

Contribution to the Community - Off Duty

Sgt. Clarke still makes a difference when he is off duty. He has volunteered his time for Cops For Cancer benefits for the past five years (including 2011). This benefit supports families and children who are fighting childhood cancer. Sgt. Clarke has participated as an escort rider duty for over a hundred law enforcement members and emergency services personnel cycle over that period, which annually covers more than 900 kilometers in nine days.

Conclusion

Due to the great success of the first speed-reader board in Burnaby, ICBC and City of Burnaby has installed another speed-reader board in another high collision area which is located at Canada Way/Rayside Ave, Burnaby. Sgt. Clarke also was the advisor for this project. Mr Couling from ICBC, and Mr Louie from the City of Burnaby, are impressed with the valuable information that Sgt. Clarke has provided and they were both happy the results of the partnership. Sgt. Clarke has spent twenty eight of his valuable years to make Canada's roads the safest in the world. He has an excellent relationship with his co-workers, private and government sector agencies.

Mr Couling from ICBC described Sgt. Clarke as one of the "most committed, professional and effective traffic officers" he has ever met. Mr Couling continues, describing Sgt Clarke as "simply a superb police officer" and a "great ICBC road safety partner". At this stage, statistics support that drivers are paying more attention when the speed-readers board is on. Based on this evidence, it demonstrates the effectiveness of the speed-reader board. The speed-reader board is one of the most recognizable projects that Sgt. Clarke has contributed to. It will have a significant legacy effect through the change in speed related behavior with motorists in the Lower Mainland, specifically targeting the next-generation community of Simon Fraser University.

Endorsement

D.R. (Derren) Lench, Superintendent
Operations Officer and Assistant OIC
Burnaby RCMP Detachment

D.T. (Dave) Critchley, Chief Superintendent
Officer in Charge
Burnaby RCMP Detachment