

COPS/Metro Alliance leaders preparing for upcoming assembly

SAN ANTONIO • COPS/Metro Alliance leaders assembled with San Antonio Police Chief William McManus on Aug. 28 at St. Mary Magdalen Church to discuss the police department policy for traffic stops and for reducing crime in the community.

McManus told the capacity crowd on the parish hall that his principal issues were immigration and crime/quality of life concerns.

“We want to make your quality of life better. ... We want you to work with us,” the chief said to rousing applause.

Regarding the SAPD’s policy on driver’s licenses, McManus said there are five or six certain forms of identification that are acceptable for the police to see if a person is stopped for a driving violation. “If you don’t have any ID, you are probably going to jail, because we don’t know who you are,” he said.

The police chief addressed public safety issues and explained the plan formed in the neighborhood around St. Timothy Parish to deal with quality of life issues in that area.

“The usual response at neighborhood meetings had been to increase patrols and visibility,” McManus explained. “What we need to happen is what happened at St. Timothy’s. We need you to work with us and walk the neighborhood with us. Tell us which problems are the most serious for you, and then we will bring together all the governmental agencies and develop a plan. We formulate a

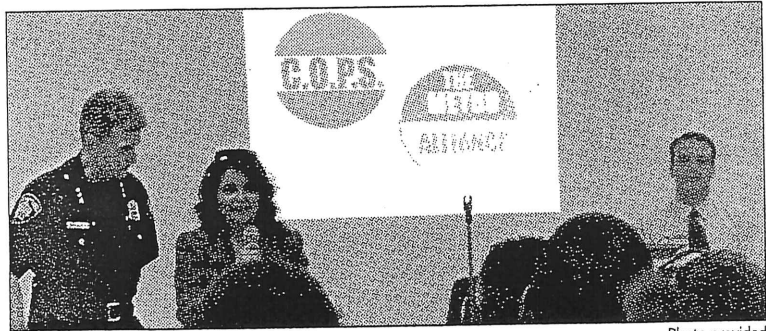


Photo provided

San Antonio Police Chief William McManus, organizer Socorro Perales, and Rev. Bret Lortie of First Unitarian Universalist Church address the crowd at the COPS/Metro Alliance leaders assembly at St. Mary Magdalen Church on Aug. 28.

plan and then work together.”

The chief concluded by committing to the group to come back and work with COPS leaders and prioritize plans. “SAPD is committed to you as a group and as individuals,” he said.

As part of that effort, COPS/Metro leaders from St. Timothy, Immaculate Conception, San Juan de Los Lagos and other congregations took part in a neighborhood walk the evening of Aug. 31 in response to safety concerns in Westside neighborhoods. McManus and San Antonio Councilman David Medina joined in, as well as San Antonio Independent School District Board Member Patti Radle, Precinct 1 Constable Ruben Tejada and representatives from the San Antonio Housing Authority. The walk began at St. Timothy Parish hall.

This action builds on the COPS/Metro organizing efforts to improve safety and quality of life in Westside neighborhoods. During a COPS/Metro

public safety assembly on July 18, Chief McManus promised a quick response and even joined parishioners for a Saturday morning neighborhood walk. Parishioners are reporting a noticeable improvement since then. The evening walk sought to keep the momentum. COPS/Metro leaders had conversations with neighbors to learn more about the community.

“We know that this is not going to be a quick fix; these are problems that are rooted in unemployment or low wages, lack of educational opportunities and being disconnected from the community,” said Natalia Tovar, a parishioner from St. Timothy. “We are not here to preach the solution, but rather to start building trust in our neighborhood, and we do that only by working together.”

In addition to these concerns, the gathering at St. Mary Magdalen also heard a report from the Education Action Team on the PreK for SA initiative.