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City police capture international award

The honor for the agency's community policing is "'the big one," says Chief Sid Klein.

By JANE MEINHARDT

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CLEARWATER -- The Clearwater Police Department has been recognized internationally for integrating law enforcement with community needs and services, a concept called community policing, to reduce crime.

The International Chiefs of Police named the department this year's winner of the Community Policing Award for agencies serving populations of 50,000 to 100,000. Police Chief Sid Klein will travel to Charlotte, N.C. next week to receive the award.

"This is the big one," Klein said of the award. "It's very much coveted on an international basis and speaks highly of our department as a whole."

When notifying Klein about the award, Gary Kempker, chairman of the association's community policing committee, said Clearwater's department was one of five winners from about 200 entries from around the United States and six foreign countries. Winners were chosen from five different categories based on the population served by agencies.

The department won because it has "championed positive change" in the agency and community with its community policing philosophy.

Klein's staff put together the nomination, which was written by grants manager Janet Skinner. The 14-page document details initiatives that began 15 years ago, long before the term community policing was used by law enforcement agencies.

It started with the opening of the city's first community policing substation, which is in Countryside. In 1985, the department identified the North Greenwood area as a good location for expanding the community policing strategy and opened a second substation.

Now, Clearwater has nine community policing substations, each started as a result of partnerships involving police, social services, city administrators, other government agencies and people in the communities served.

Klein said he used ideas and philosophies gleaned from team policing while he worked in Lakewood, Colo. before coming to Clearwater in 1981.

"One of the concepts that worked was geographic responsibility," he said. "We built our own version of what is called community policing today."

"I've stuck to ensuring it will be part of patrol, which eliminates barriers within the department and the community," Klein continued. "It's still in the development posture, and it's always changing to accommodate the changes in the community."

