Case Study

Robert Clarke Officer

Department

The Davenport Police Department is a small department with 32 sworn officers. It has a basic organizational structure with line and staff functions. The line function includes 24 patrol officers and four investigators. Staff functions include three records clerks and four secretarial staff. The department supplements the patrol force by using reserve officers on a frequent basis. Reserves must go through the same training as regular officers but they pay for the training, uniform, and most equipment. Reserves are required to work 16 hours per month. They are especially useful when the town has special events that require assistance with traffic control. However, the department is short-handed at times. If an officer calls in sick or is on vacation, the entire department is affected with increased workloads. Often, the chief himself fills in, answering calls on patrol. Because the department is small, officers consider themselves more like family than colleagues.

Crime

Davenport enjoys a low crime rate. There has not been a homicide in seven years. Sexual assaults are rare or at least rarely reported. Assaults are typically domestic in nature, although there was one felonious assault at a Little League game between a father and an umpire last year. Burglaries and larcenies are within normal rates for a town of this size. Most of the burglaries and larcenies are committed by juveniles who live in the area. There is a high clearance rate for most crimes because almost everyone knows everyone else, and everyone else’s business, in Davenport.

Community

Davenport is an old historic community of 48,000 people. Most residents grew up in Davenport and have old family ties to the area. Many of the houses date back to the Victorian era or even earlier. Davenport is 26 miles from Evansville. Evansville is a larger city, which is where most of the residents of Davenport go to do their weekly shopping or to eat out at upscale restaurants. There are a few restaurants in Davenport but they are either fast-food chains or “mom and pop” diners. Davenport is known for one event: storytelling. One week a year, people from all over the country come to Davenport to the annual Storytelling Festival. Usually in July, when the weather is at its best, Davenport hosts nearly 3000 visitors.

Officer

Officer Robert Clarke has been a patrol officer with the Davenport Police Department for four years. He is well liked by other officers and has always performed outstandingly with the department. It has even been recommended that Clarke be considered for the sergeant’s slot when Sergeant Anderson retires next year. Officer Clarke also serves with the interagency emergency response squad. The squad is referred to as the special operations squad (SOS) and is composed of local and state officers. Clarke was selected to serve based on his completion of the special training that was offered last year. Clarke made the squad and made his department proud. The SOS is used for hostage details, drug busts, and other situations that may require an assault team. For the last four years Officer Clarke’s evaluations have been exemplary. He has never taken a sick day and is always prepared and willing to take on additional duties and responsibilities.

Problem

Officer Clarke is young and unmarried. During the last four years, he has had a few girlfriends, but nothing serious. He dated a woman at the court clerk’s office last year, but nothing came of it. He seems the type to be married to his job and not one to settle down. However, several months ago, he met a woman at an elementary school where he had given a lecture to some children. She was a teacher’s aide and ready to graduate with her degree and teaching certificate. Peggy is an extremely beautiful girl. The other officers in the department thought she was a model when they saw her with Officer Clarke. Officer Clarke began to date Peggy frequently, and they became somewhat of a couple. But Peggy had a job waiting for her in Williamsville, a city about four hours from Davenport. Peggy had grown up in Williamsville and had gotten a job as a teacher in one of the elementary schools there. She was looking forward to the job, but Officer Clarke wasn’t too excited about it.

When Peggy left for her new job, Officer Clarke was depressed and despondent. He was in love, and the separation from Peggy was almost more than he could bear. Over the next few months, he traveled to Williamsville as much as possible. In fact, he would sometimes get to work late because he had driven to see her the previous evening and would just be getting back. Officer Clarke’s behavior on the job began to change for the worse. He started coming to work late or calling in sick and sometimes would not show up or call at all. When he did get to work, his uniform was wrinkled, he appeared as though he had not slept, he was sometimes unshaven, and he was becoming forgetful. He forgot to go to traffic court last week, and the judge dismissed all of the traffic citations he had written.

Sergeant Gregory, Clarke’s supervisor, understood what was wrong with Clarke, but things were getting out of hand. The Storytelling Festival starts in a few weeks and the department will need everyone working. Clarke needs to straighten up.

What Would You Do?

If you were Sergeant Gregory, how would you “straighten up” Officer Clarke? Can the problems Officer Clarke is experiencing be overcome with minimal effort or will it take more substantial action to correct his behavior?