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## **HIGH POINT'S OVERT DRUG MARKET STRATEGY HONORED AS INNOVATIONS IN AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AWARD WINNER**

### ***Harvard University's Ash Institute Honors Collaboration with Community Leaders and Law Enforcement to Halt Neighborhood Crime***

**Cambridge, Mass., – September 25, 2007** – The Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government today announced the Overt Drug Market Strategy of North Carolina's High Point Police Department as a 2007 Innovations in American Government Award winner. As one of seven award winners announced at yesterday's Innovations in American Government Awards twentieth anniversary reception in Washington, D.C., the program will receive \$100,000 to promote replication of its crime reduction efforts and share best practices around the country.

Prior to the launch of its Overt Drug Market Strategy, the High Point Police Department struggled to halt escalating drug trade and violent crime throughout the neighborhoods of High Point, North Carolina. Sweeping, unfocused policing campaigns were largely ineffective and frequently jeopardized relationships with community members. Not only did the area's drug trade create an unhealthy environment of fear and danger for residents, High Point suffered from plummeting property values and little outside investment from businesses in those areas affected by the drug trade.

Created in 1997, the Police Department's Repeat Offender Notification Strategy has achieved significant and sustainable results in reducing crime rates through collaboration with community leaders. From 1997 to 2005, High Point reports an overall 47 percent reduction in its violent crime

index. In 2003, High Point expanded on the Repeat Offender Notification Strategy and implemented the Overt Drug Market Strategy and has seen a 35 percent sustained decrease in violent crime in specific neighborhoods crippled by the drug trade.

The Overt Drug Market Strategy incorporates a three-phase intervention approach to cutting crime:

- **Phase I:** Using detailed crime mapping tools and through relationships with neighborhood policing programs, officers identify strong criminal cases against the offenders that present the largest threat to the community.
- **Phase II:** Community leaders publicly confront such offenders and offer viable lifestyle alternatives to drug dealing. Neighborhood support organizations follow up with help obtaining employment, transportation, food and shelter assistance to ensure such offenders have every opportunity to change for the better.
- **Phase III:** Police lay out the alternative, lengthy prison sentences that await criminals if they do not amend their behavior and take advantage of community support.

“We are grateful for the opportunity to share our best practices in violent crime reduction with communities around the country as a 2007 Innovations in American Government winner,” said Major Marty A. Sumner of the High Point Police Department. “As our program’s successes demonstrate, community leaders must play an integral role in all effective policing strategies. We are not only giving offenders a second chance, our community is actively playing a positive role in transforming our neighborhoods into safe places to live and work.”

“The High Point Police Department relied on its own citizens as its greatest resource to combat violent neighborhood crime,” said Stephen Goldsmith, director of the Innovations in American Government Program at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government. “As a result of the successes of the Overt Drug Market Strategy, children no longer fear walking to school, businesses and residents are returning to the area and offenders rejoin the society as active community members. We are pleased to honor High Point’s commendable work and believe cities across the country will learn from this example.”

Established in 1986 at Harvard University by the Ford Foundation, the Innovations in American Government Award Program has honored 174 federal, state and local government agencies. Through this annual competition, the Program provides concrete evidence that government can work to improve the quality of life of citizens. Many award-winning programs have been replicated

across jurisdictions and policy areas, and some have served as harbingers of today's reform strategies or as forerunners to state and federal legislation. By highlighting exemplary models of government's innovative programs over the past 20 years, the Program drives continued progress and encourages research and teaching cases at Harvard University and other academic institutions worldwide.

**About The Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation**

The Roy and Lila Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation advances excellence in governance and strengthens democratic institutions worldwide. Through its research, publications, leadership training, global network and awards program – developed in collaboration with a diverse, engaged community of scholars and practitioners - the Ash Institute fosters creative and effective government problem-solving and serves as a catalyst for addressing many of the most pressing needs of the world's citizens. The Ford Foundation is a founding donor of the institute. Additional information about The Ash Institute is available at [www.ashinstitute.harvard.edu](http://www.ashinstitute.harvard.edu). Organizations are encouraged to apply to the 2008 Innovations in American Government Awards by October 15, 2007 at [www.innovationsaward.harvard.edu](http://www.innovationsaward.harvard.edu).

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