



# CASE STUDY REPORT

## WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT?

This report is intended to show how Sunset Hill Stoneware's products can be used as fundraising tools and gifts for law enforcement organizations. It details how one city police organization, Lincoln Park Police Department, uses Sunset Hill Stoneware products to raise funds to benefit their local community and support their relationship with residents in their Detroit suburb.

Author:  
Sandra Sepaniak  
Digital Marketing Assistant  
Sunset Hill Stoneware

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# Introduction to the Report

Fundraising for various community causes is common for police departments all over the U.S. However, sometimes the officers in charge of these fundraisers prefer to use quality, American-made merchandise.

Located just outside of Detroit, Lincoln Park, Mich. is a suburb of about 38,000 people within a patch of about 4 square miles south of the city. According to Lt. Richard Kolakovich, there aren't any major factories or industries in town, and most of the businesses are smaller or retail-oriented.

The Lincoln Park Police Department consists of about 50 officers from the chief and through every rank below him. The department had a community officer previously, but the position was temporarily cut due to budget issues. However, around 2015, the program was reinstated. To help fund the position,

the department held fundraisers and sold T-shirts and other swag to support events through the program.

There are several community events the LPPD either helps fund or participates in throughout the year, including a Cops Care picnic, Coffee with a Cop and hosting a tent at the community's Cinco de Mayo celebration. These events are designed to foster trust between the department and members of the community.

Lt. Kolakovich explained that his officers wanted to show children and adults in their community that they don't only show up when something bad or terrible is

happening in their neighborhood.

Lt. Kolakovich got the idea to sell Sunset Hill Stoneware mugs and steins to the community when he was looking at a mug he bought on a previous trip to Yellowstone National Park. Since the department began fundraising with the mugs in December 2017, they have reordered multiple times and had several instances where they've sold out of their mugs.

With their first four orders, the LPPD made \$2,686 to supplement their community policing fund and also gave the mugs as gifts to members of their community to build good public relations.

## Executive Summary

- This report examines how Sunset Hill Stoneware's mugs and steins have helped the Lincoln Park Police Department promote its fundraising efforts since it first began using the products in December 2017. It indicates how the LPPD struggled with finding merchandise they wanted to sell to support their community fundraisers and the solutions Sunset Hill Stoneware offered.
- Sunset Hill Stoneware was able to adapt LPPD's unique badge onto a variety of mug and stein styles for the department to use for fundraising and community relations purposes.
- Since the Lincoln Park Police Department began using Sunset Hill Stoneware mugs and steins, all of the mugs they have ordered either sold out or sold well beyond what the department anticipated. The department has also made \$2,686 as a reserve for their community policing program after four orders of mugs as of July 2018.





# What Problem is Being Addressed

Fundraising for LPPD's revived community policing program called for better-quality merchandise.

Lt. Kolakovich states that his department used to only sell T-shirts and other similar types of merchandise in order to fund their community policing program and bring more events to build relationships with Lincoln Park residents. However, he was looking for other options to help generate funds for the program.

To him, printed coffee mugs simply weren't an option as a fundraising idea. "It's hard to find a good-quality coffee mug," Lt. Kolakovich said. "It's hard to find something that isn't porcelain and printed crap."

Lt. Kolakovich first considered Sunset Hill Stoneware because of a mug he has at home that he purchased on a trip to Yellowstone National Park about 10 years ago.

When Lt. Kolakovich first contacted Sunset Hill Stoneware, he was impressed

with the company's dedication to customer service, as the department's new account specialist responded to him with brochures and glaze charts within an hour of his first email. He had his first mockup of a LPPD-branded mug within a matter of a few days.

While one of his bosses initially thought that the mugs wouldn't sell, to their surprise everyone in the police department ended up purchasing one after the mugs went for sale shortly before Christmas. Combined with purchases from officers' relatives, all 96 of the mugs sold out shortly after New Year's Day.

With the next few orders of mugs, LPPD began selling them at events and on display in the lobby of their headquarters. The community has responded accordingly and bought mugs from them ever since.

## Context

Lincoln Park Police Department operates a community policing program in order to foster positive relationships between its officers and Lincoln Park residents. The program frequently relies on fundraising for programs such as the Cinco de Mayo festival and providing backpacks and other school supplies to area students in the fall, among other events.

## Problems LPPD Faced

Lincoln Park Police Department was using cheaper, lower-quality promotional products such as T-shirts in order to raise funds for their community programs. This merchandise left much to be desired, so Lt. Kolakovich began looking for alternatives to bring in money for the program.

## Factors LPPD Considered

The police department wanted to have a product that they could use not only for fundraising, but also as a way to promote departmental pride and establish good public relations with visitors from the community.

# Solution



Lt. Kolakovich was impressed with the quality of Sunset Hill Stoneware's mugs and steins, so he started the ordering process by sending a message to the pottery's general inbox. He intended to pay for the mugs out of his own pocket and paying himself back later.

Within one hour of sending his email, an account specialist from Sunset Hill Stoneware responded to his email and provided him with a glaze guide and product catalogs so he could choose the mug or stein style and color that he wanted for his first order.

After he emailed the Lincoln Park Police Department badge to Sunset Hill

Stoneware, the company's art department got to work. They adapted Lt. Kolakovich's samples and references into a manually drawn badge-shaped medallion featuring the department's name and information with the Michigan state seal.

From the start, Lt. Kolakovich was impressed with the quality and fast turnaround of the first 96 mugs he ordered. While uniform in color and shape, no two pieces of his stoneware were exactly alike, highlighting the handmade features of the mugs.

"The detail they put on the medallion looks like the badges we put on our uniforms," Lt. Kolakovich said. "The detail

of the badge is flawless."

Before they were even sold to members of the public, many of the department's police officers bought the first order of mugs to be able to display their departmental pride. In turn, the officers' relatives purchased the mugs for themselves to show their support as well.

Lt. Kolakovich has since ordered more mugs for his department, and even officers who have retired or left the police force have bought mugs for themselves. One of his former officers who moved to Florida brought four LPPD mugs back with him as samples for his own community program.

## Lincoln Park Community Profile

- Population: 38,000
- Number of schools: 9
- Median Household Income: \$41,406\*



# Implementation



Initially, Lt. Kolakovich recalled his bosses were unsure of whether or not selling stoneware mugs would work as a fundraising idea. However, even early on the results were quite different.

After the LPPD began selling its custom stoneware to the public, the response from Lincoln Park residents exceeded expectations. During one recent mug sale, Lt. Kolakovich said that one local business owner bought \$900 worth of mugs—everything they had in stock.

“He likes to support the police, and he has a business in our town, so he wanted to buy 25 mugs,” Lt. Kolakovich explained.

One of the most recent orders the LPPD placed was for 215 Sunset Hill Stoneware mugs to hand out at local events, such as the department’s community picnic,



a golf outing, a city-run carnival and the local Cinco de Mayo celebration.

At the latter event, Lt. Kolakovich noted that he was expecting the department to only sell 10 mugs. After the event was over, they sold 33 mugs to residents and festival goers.

The department has also begun using the mugs to help establish positive public relationships with the Lincoln Park community. For example, to thank a local resident who frequently brings free drinks and sandwiches to the department, they gave a mug to her as a display of gratitude.

The department has also given mugs to other residents who give back to their community, such as a student at Lincoln Park High School who regularly hosted fundraisers such as blanket drives, sock



drives and cereal drives to help those in need. The department gifted him with a mug to show appreciation for what he was doing for his community.

Lt. Kolakovich credits the success of these sales and gifts to the handmade quality of Sunset Hill Stoneware’s products and the fact that all the stoneware is made in the United States.

“If it looked like crap, nobody would have bought it,” he said.

While the LPPD’s Sunset Hill Stoneware mug fundraising efforts are still in their infancy, the department brings mugs to all of its events. Each time they bring mugs to sell as fundraisers, Lt. Kolakovich reports that they sell more than anticipated. This gives the officers a chance to joke and connect with their community while they sell mugs.





# Results of Using Stoneware

LINCOLN PARK POLICE DEPARTMENT IS USING THE FUNDS THEY RAISE SELLING SUNSET HILL STONEWARE MUGS TO GIVE BACK TO THEIR COMMUNITY.



LPPD has raised thousands of dollars to fund its community programs

Using Sunset Hill Stoneware mugs and steins allowed the LPPD to raise funds with a high-quality product that people would be willing to buy. In addition, they were also able to command a higher price point than they would for other promotional products. Thanks in large part to mug sales, the department raised more than \$2,600 to purchase backpacks and other school supplies for area children and host more community events.



The mugs frequently sell more than expected or sell out

Every time the LPPD has hosted a new mug sale at its headquarters or brought its mugs to public events like Cinco de Mayo, they sold more than they had originally expected or sold out altogether, further raising funds to support its community policing efforts.



The funds go back to the community and are used as gifts to residents

Funds raised from mug sales support children in the area through providing school supplies and events to keep them engaged and develop a relationship of trust between them and their local police officers.



# Products

Because of Sunset Hill Stoneware's mugs and steins, the Lincoln Park Police Department now has a fast, quick, easy way to generate funds to support its community policing programs and maintain a positive rapport with the city's residents.

Lincoln Park Police Department has made more than \$2,700 thus far to fund its community policing programs.

Lt. Kolakovich said the quality of Sunset Hill Stoneware's products is apparent to both the Lincoln Park Police Department's officers and the residents who purchase the mugs and steins. Had they not used the stoneware, he estimates that the department's fundraising efforts would be diminished by half.

Moreover, while people almost always like to receive gifts, the department may have had a different reaction if they had chosen to use a cheaper, lesser-quality product like sunglasses or T-shirts. Instead, the handmade stoneware mugs are always appreciated as gifts and fly off the shelves when the department sells them.

Thanks to the sales made from the custom stoneware mugs, the department is now able to host more events and programs for area residents and children. The officers will be able to offer prizes for kids at their wintertime Skate with a Cop event and host more community gatherings like Coffee with a Cop and Slushee with a Cop.

In turn, the mugs both directly and indirectly impact the relationship the LPPD shares with its 38,000 residents. By giving mugs and steins to residents, they're able to show

that they respect and appreciate their citizens. Furthermore, with the revenue from the mug sales going back to fund community events, the department is able to build more trust with their citizens and show that their officers don't only show up whenever there's criminal activity or accidents. Lt. Kolakovich even said that he's able to joke with residents whenever he's selling mugs to them.

"A lot of people don't get my jokes," he said. However, the missed jokes might be owed to the fact that some people don't expect police officers to have a sense of humor. Selling the mugs gives the Lieutenant and his fellow officers a chance to show the public otherwise.

Furthermore, Lt. Kolakovich was very satisfied with his experiences interacting with the Sunset Hill Stoneware team every time he reordered, from the friendliness of the customer care and sales staff to the photos they sent while the mugs were being created. He also appreciated some of Sunset Hill Stoneware's efforts to recognize police events like National Law Enforcement Week.

"They just have an incredible staff," Lt. Kolakovich said. "I'm sure I would have been disappointed if I had gone elsewhere."

## Community Policing Benefits

- Provides free school supplies to Lincoln Park children
- Supports Lincoln Park Police Department participation in community events like Cinco de Mayo
- Establishes a positive, trusting relationship between the department and the community.



# Conclusion

The Lincoln Park Police Department's community policing program has generated enough funds through selling Sunset Hill Stoneware products to give back even more to its residents. The department now hosts more local events to connect with the community and help build better relationships with the residents and their children.

Lt. Kolakovich recommends Sunset Hill Stoneware to any law enforcement agency seeking to raise funds or maintain positive public relations with their community. The branded, American-made merchandise possesses handmade quality and is an ideal way to promote organizational pride.

"It's a no-brainer," Lt. Kolakovich said. "If you want a quality product to represent your organization with your logo, you'd be stupid to go somewhere else."

## Benefits



### Benefit no 1

Sunset Hill Stoneware's products allowed the Lincoln Park Police Department to raise funds in support of its community policing program, which benefits area residents of all ages.



### Benefit no 2

According to Lt. Kolakovich, the customer care team at Sunset Hill Stoneware is an incredible staff and very personable when working with him and his department to adapt their badge to a custom clay medallion.



### Benefit no 3

The mugs and steins from Sunset Hill Stoneware have also made excellent gifts for officers to give to Lincoln Park residents in thanks for helping the department and community.

## References

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## Contact information



1-800-509-4662



sandra.sepaniak@shstoneware.com



1416 S. Commercial St.  
Neenah, WI 54956



www.shstoneware.com