



April 8, 2010: Over the last seven months, Casa Grande and Coolidge, Arizona have been the scene of the largest anti-drug operation in the recent history of Pinal County, as 24 suspects were indicted in what became known as operation “Fertile Ground”. The operation was a joint effort of the Casa Grande Police Department, the Pinal County Sheriff’s Office, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration’s Mobile Enforcement Unit (DEA-MET) and the Pinal County Attorney’s Office. Police seized large quantities of PCP, methamphetamine, crack and powder cocaine, all very dangerous illegal drugs.

This is the third multi-jurisdictional drug interdiction operation in as many years in the region. Debriefing discussions among coalition leaders and law enforcement officials following the first two events led to the discovery that these types of operations create a vacuum effect whereby other drug dealers step in to fill the ‘market’ void. Their shared interest was to rebuild the community by providing resources for those who remain in the neighborhoods. In operation Fertile Ground, the lead law enforcement agency advised the local anti-drug coalition Director of the impending operation, allowing the coalition to prepare a community-based response plan to be implemented once the arrests and indictments were completed.

The Casa Grande Alliance, a 40-member Drug Free Communities coalition, has devised a three-pronged response plan for neighborhood strengthening and remediation. The plan includes (1) providing treatment resource information to addicts whose drug supply has been interrupted by Operation Fertile Ground, (2) working with schools to facilitate social service referrals for families disrupted by this event, and (3) working closely with Casa Grande Police Department to establish Block Watches in those neighborhoods where the dealers were located. This plan builds upon the coalition’s existing DFC Support Program funded projects.

The coalition launched their plan through a news release the day after the Operation Fertile Ground indictments front-page announcement, a public presentation to the Police Advisory Board the following day, followed by a front-page article in the local newspaper.