

West Orange Police Junior Police Academy Reduces Juvenile Delinquency

By Henry M. Holden

The West Orange Police Junior Police Academy (JPA) is a joint venture between the West Orange Police Department, the Township of West Orange, and the West Orange Board of Education. Its intent is to make a proactive effort to curtail juvenile delinquency and deviant behavior committed by middle school children, ages 11-14.

The goal is for the participants to interact in a scaled down version, pseudo type environment of an actual police academy while having fun in the process.

"We started this back in 2000, when I was a school resource officer," said Lt. John Morella, who helped organize the program. "It's a pseudo police academy where it allows the kids to see what we go through on an everyday basis.

"We're allotted 90 kids in class," he said. "We usually get

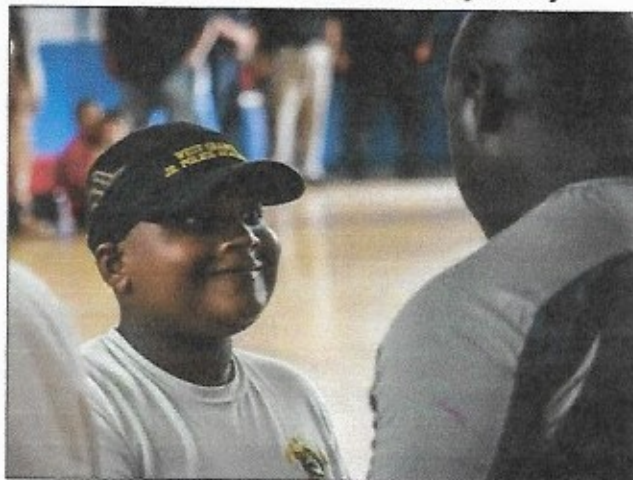
the maximum amount allowed and sometimes we have a waiting list."

According to Morella, in the last 18 years about 1,500 kids have gone through the academy.

"We measure success by seeing if we have any run-ins with these kids during their high school career," said Morella. "Typically, we have a very small number of kids who run into problems, once they get into high school. We've been successful because the kids go out and have productive careers."

According to Morella, "It allows the officers to look human, and the kids to see us in a different light, and it puts a name on a face for the kids.

"We will see these kids when they are out and about, and they will know who we are," he added. "It gives them a sense of comfort, and it helps enable the trust issue between



the kids and the cops."

The academy lasts for one week during the early summer.

"We get a grant from the county and we're able to do multiple field trips during the summer when the kids are off from school. We generally have between eight and 10 officers to assist us in addition to some civilians, and some kids who

graduated from the JPA and are now in college and come back to help.

"We want to promote better relationships between the police officers and the youth, so we take them to various places," he continued. "For example, this year we went to Point Pleasant for the day and

continued on page 4

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Junior Police Academy...

continued from page 2

took them on rides. We also took them to a minor-league baseball game."

The field trips let the kids see the police in a different light; it helps break the barriers down.

"We usually don't wear our uniforms on these trips," he said. "Typically, we will wear a polo shirt and shorts."

As part of the PRIDE program (Promoting Responsibility in Drug Education) the 'Cadets' will have the opportunity to learn from currently incar-

cerated model prisoners to understand the ramifications of making poor choices.

"Usually, the Department of Corrections will send us four model prisoners with their guards, and the person who runs the program," he said. "They go out to different schools throughout the state, and the prisoners will tell their stories. We do it as part of a school related event."

Applications for the academy go out in April and are accepted until the end of May.

Did You Know?

Toyota has long dominated the North American automotive market. With more than 40 million sold across the globe, the Toyota Corolla, introduced in 1966, has been dubbed the best-sell-

ing car of all time, according to Autoblog. By 1974, the Corolla became the best-selling car in the world. Car and Driver says that other Toyota models, including the RAV4 and Camry, also are consumer favorites.

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continued from front page

awareness, empathy and altruism.

When asked about his reaction to it all, Pete Recchia still can't wrap his head around it.

"At the end of the day, I never realized what good hearted people there are out there reaching out to help. Thank God for my son. Without

him, I don't think any of this would be possible."

For further information or details on organ donation and to see how to help Peter Recchia, or others like him, please contact the Einstein Medical Center in Philadelphia at 215-456-4525 and ask for Transplant Coordinator, Janine Abi-
uso.



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