

D.A.R.E. is more than an anti-drug program

D.A.R.E.'s Role in Preventing Violence in America's Schools—

Education specialists specifically designed the D.A.R.E. curriculum for delivery by experienced law enforcement officers. Evaluations of D.A.R.E. have documented that an overwhelming majority of school administrators and teachers rated the D.A.R.E. officer as the best feature of the program.

Beyond the fact that D.A.R.E. officers have been shown to be effective classroom instructors, D.A.R.E. is a fine example of a community-oriented, positive police program. **D.A.R.E. is not just a drug education program;** it is crime and violence prevention in our nation's schools.

An important byproduct of D.A.R.E. is the impact made by these uniformed officers, who work onsite in the classroom. Numerous examples of D.A.R.E. officers preventing violence in the schools are reported every year.

Because of these highly credible D.A.R.E. officers in the schools, students develop a close and trusting relationship. This relationship results in students letting officers know if "Johnny has a gun in his backpack" or about other potentially violent situations that may occur on campus.

When not in a classroom teaching, each D.A.R.E. officer is a roving, armed, uniformed, radio-equipped officer in the school. Given that many school population's number in the thousands of students per school, schools are communities of their own. **D.A.R.E. officers protect those communities.**

When emergencies occur at or near a D.A.R.E. officer's school, it is the D.A.R.E. officer who helps lock down the school, monitor the situation, and work with field officers to protect the children and staff. The presence of a uniformed D.A.R.E. officer on campus discourages any "Columbine-like event" from occurring.

Nationally, instances where such cases did occur when a D.A.R.E. officer was at the school were resolved peacefully (as in the case of the New York student who surrendered himself, his explosive devices and weapons to the D.A.R.E. officer before he could carry out his intent to blow up the school) or (as in the case of the San Diego area D.A.R.E. officer who disabled the shot-gun wielding student before the student could kill his peers).

D.A.R.E. is one of the few prevention programs that excite students, parents and communities. That excitement and awareness is often expanded to include other diverse prevention and intervention approaches. D.A.R.E. officers are encouraged to become aware of all school and community prevention initiatives and to encourage participation in broad based parenting, peer, student to student, and community awareness projects to prevent violence and drug use.

Over 50,000 D.A.R.E. officers have been trained and certified to teach the D.A.R.E. program and now serve to prevent violence in our schools and provide a building block and source of support for all prevention activity.

Attached are just a few examples of how D.A.R.E. is much more than just a curriculum—it is a relationship that develops between D.A.R.E. officers and students to help produce a healthy and safe child.

D.A.R.E. classes pay off with self-defense lessons

A 12-year-old girl who took the class escapes an alleged attacker

By Marcus Franklin

West Carrollton D.A.R.E. police officer Gene Jarman on Thursday characterized the 12-year-old girl who fought off an alleged attacker Tuesday as a friendly, energetic student who asked lots of questions in his course last year.

Police say Jason Michael Shaner, 19, tried to pull the girl into his car Tuesday. She said she struggled free, kicked him in the groin and rode off on her bike to tell her parents.

Jarman said he was impressed with the girl's "assertiveness and her ability to recognize a dangerous situation and not be afraid to act."

The girl, her father and some law enforcement officials believe the D.A.R.E. course is, at least, partly responsible for her escape.

"I'd like to think that all of our D.A.R.E. students would do that," Jarman said. "She was an excellent D.A.R.E. student."

In recent years, the Drug Abuse Resistance Education program has expanded to include instruction on how students can protect themselves in dangerous situations.

Every year in West Carrollton, officials conduct separate 17-week courses for fifth-graders and eight-graders.

"The eighth-grade course is a follow-up," Jarman said. "We discuss a lot of the same stuff but we get a little bit deeper than we do with the 5th grade."

Workbooks help students learn the meaning of words such as assertiveness, violence and drug abuse.

"During the first week of class, we talk about their rights to be safe, to say no," the 15-year police veteran said. "They should never let anyone touch them if they feel uncomfortable. We don't want them to be passive and let people take advantage of them."

The students can drop questions anonymously in a box.

Queries range from what's it like to be in a police chase and "Have you ever shot anyone?" to advice on what to do about alcoholic or tobacco-addicted parents. "You never know what you're gonna get," he said.

Darren Nunn, 14, said he took a DARE course as a fourth-grader at Fairview Elementary School. The course was enlightening for the Paul Laurence Dunbar High School freshman. "I thought I knew what to do in (dangerous) situations but I didn't."

Nunn said the course taught him how to resist peer pressure and how to stay away from drugs and strangers.

The course also teaches youngsters about gangs and how to avoid becoming involved with them. To find out whether your child's school has a DARE Program contact the school.

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Girl, 10, D.A.R.E.d to Scream

By Jerry Hicks – West Carrollton

It was the kind of real-life publicity money couldn't buy: A 10-year-old Newport Beach girl named Amber escaped a would-be abductor near her home last weekend. Then, with TV cameras rolling, she credited D.A.R.E. officer at her school for teaching her what to do.

You can bet hundreds of D.A.R.E. officers through the Southland were whooping when they saw that.

"You hope what you say in a class might someday save a child's life," said one D.A.R.E. officer, Tom Monarch. "But to actually hear her say it, that's just a great feeling."

If you have youngsters in school, you know that D.A.R.E. stands for rug Abuse Resistance Education and that it's taught by police officers on school campuses. In the classes for younger kids, the officers emphasize personal safety more than drug abuse.

D.A.R.E., begun by former Los Angeles Police Chief Darryl Gates in 1983, has its share of critics. That's partly because it's hard to measure its effectiveness. How do you quantify the Number of times a student turns down a drug offer—or a ride in a stranger's vehicle?

But D.A.R.E.'s popularity ahs mushroomed, Growing from 10 D.A.R.E. officers its first year, its 17-week courses are now taught to 35 million students nationwide.

"How well does it work? That's a crapshoot; we can never say for sure," said Lynne Bloomberg, who coordinates the D.A.R.E. program for the Newport Mesa Unified School District. "But I'm wholeheartedly convinced it's worth doing."

Just ask Amber. She'd just gotten off her bicycle to pick flowers in her Eastbluff neighborhood when someone pulled up in a truck, opened the door and tried to grab her.

Amber said she knew from her D.A.R.E. officer not to get close enough that he could reach her and that she should scream and run like crazy to get away.

Something else her D.A.R.E. officer taught her' Put personal safety firs. But when possible, try to get a physical description. How's this for Amber's efforts:

The man was white, in his 30s, with short brown hair and a tattoo on his left shoulder. He was driving a green late-model Toyota pickup, and his license plate contained the letters PGE.

"She did great," Monarch said.

You can excuse his being so proud. Amber is one of Monarch's D.A.R.E. students.

What Monarch and other D.A.R.E. officers emphasize are the safety tips you might want to discuss with your children.

Here are some of the other tips:

* You're separated from your parents at a store, so you head to the parking lot, thinking you'll find them. Wrong. Stay in one spot; your parents will likely come back there looking for you.

* You're lost at the airport. Look for a uniformed person.

* Beware of some phony messages or questions that abductors use: "Your parents have been in an accident. The hospital sent me to get you." Or "Have you seen a little brown puppy?" Or "You know which way to Katella Ave?" An unsuspecting child moves close enough just to say no—and gets grabbed.

Here's another tip: Come up with a code word with your children. If an emergency does arise, make sure someone you send to get your children knows what the code word is.

A final word from Monarch: "I'll tell the students, if a stranger approaches you, use your talents. You're loud and you're fast. So run and scream. They love to act that out."

For young Amber, it wasn't just acting.

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Dare Officers don't just fight drugs

Ramapo officer discovers alleged case of sex abuse.

By Kate Boylan

RAMAPO – Something seemed to be bothering one of the little girls in Ramapo Police Officer Keith Schwartz's Friday DARE class a few weeks ago. He couldn't get her off his mind all weekend.

Schwartz made up an excuse to go back to the school the following Monday. He met the 10-year-old girl in the hallway and asked if she wanted to talk.

She took a deep breath and told her secret.

"I'm being abused. Could you protect me?"

Her grandfather had been raping her since she was 6.

"It was really as bad as it could get," Schwartz said. "It took a lot of courage on the girl's part to come forward."

The grandfather, whose name is being withheld to protect the victim, was charged with first-degree aggravated sexual abuse, a felony, and faces, up to 25 years in jail.

For the first time in years, the little girl could sleep at night.

To many officers, the Drug Abuse Resistance Education program is about more than teaching kids to say no to drugs, alcohol and violence. To Schwartz, it's also about protecting children and care themselves.

DARE became controversial nationally when studies showed it doesn't make much of a difference in keeping children off drugs. NBC television reported March 18 that a University of Illinois study showed more suburban DARE graduates used drugs than suburban students who did not take the course.

The Los Angeles-based organization countered that an Ohio State study shows the program curtails drug use if classes are continued through high school.

Ramapo Police Chief Timothy Ruggiero said the girl who trusted her DARE officer illustrates the importance of programs that put police officers in touch with children.

"If they save one child, what's the value we can place on that?" Ruggiero said. "Who would know what her fate would have been if there weren't some intervening?"

Other DARE officers have had similar experiences. "People don't understand that there's a lot more to it than just the anti-drug part," Suffern's Officer Clarke Osborn said.

Many students become familiar with police in early grades through Adopt-A-Cop programs, which emphasize such issues as avoiding strangers and good touch/bad touch.

Ruggiero said he would like to see police working in high schools as well. Schools have guidance counselors, nurses, teacher and others who help. But police become extra resources, Ruggiero said.

Before telling Schwartz her story, the girl asked whether he would have to tell anyone. He would, but he assured her he would stand by her during the process.

"I'll never forget it, the way she looked at me," Schwartz said. "It's like a whole load off her mind, I mean rightfully so. I asked her after why she told me, and she said, 'Because you're my best friend.'"

"To some kids you're a cop, to some kids you're a teacher, and to some kids you're a friend. And to some kids you're all three. We're not out there chasing rainbows. We know we're not going to change the world. We do our little part."

Osborn can be seen chatting with youngsters at Suffern street fairs or sharing pizza with them downtown, an advantage officers, in larger areas don't have, he said. "Any time they need me, they can walk downtown and find me."

He also reached out through A DARE hockey league, trips to ballgames and through a special telephone line, 357-DARE.

Sloatsburg Elementary Principal Ron Anagnostis remembers one student who got help a few years ago after sharing a family problem. He sees Dare's benefits through essays his students write at the end of the 17-week program.

"This class will probably save my future," one states.

Community support, such as all the volunteers who cooked up a recent spaghetti dinner, as well as town funding, have been great, Anagnostis said.

"But really the philosophy for us is that if it helps one child to say 'no' at a critical moment in their life, then every single penny that is invested in that program is worth it."

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Hero D.A.R.E. Officer

Richard Agundez Jr. was a hero to one El Cajon woman long before he helped bring a quick end to the violence at Granite Hills High School.

He saved Laura Mosier's life 13 years ago when he rounded up nine strangers to help him lift an overturned Ford Bronco off her.

'He is a real hero,' Mosier said. 'As soon as I heard about the shooting, I thought, 'Oh yeah,' he's probably right involved in it.' It didn't surprise me.'

Agundez, an El Cajon, California, police officer assigned to the Granite Hills campus, responded swiftly when the shooting started at 12:55pm, engaging in a brief running gun battle with a teen-ager armed with a shotgun and a handgun.

The 20-year veteran radioed for help and then chased down the gunman, identified as 18-year-old Jason Hoffman, a student who classmates said had not been seen on campus for some time. Agundez was named El Cajon's Officer of the Year last year.

'Agent Agundez is the hero of the day,' said Granite Hills Principal Georgette Torres. 'He certainly is our hero.'

Agundez joined the El Cajon Police Department in 1981, working in patrol and traffic. For five years, He was assigned to the department's SWAT team, and most recently had served as a D.A.R.E. officer.

By Dong-Phong Nguyen and Karen Kucher

San Diego Union - Tribune

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School Officer Credits D.A.R.E. With Helping Thwart Possible Attack

At a time when critics question the effectiveness of a popular drug prevention effort, a deputy who defused a potentially tragic bomb threat at a high school has only praise for the program.

Chemung County Sheriff's Deputy Robert Hurley said it was only through the Drug Abuse Resistance Education program that he came to know Jeremy Getman. And it was that encounter at D.A.R.E. six years ago, Hurley said Tuesday, that may have ended an incident a Southside High School that parents, students and law enforcement said could have turned out like the Columbine High School killings.

Prosecutors say when Getman came to school on Valentine's Day, he carried a loaded, .22 Ruger pistol, a sawed-off shotgun with ammunition and 18 homemade bombs.

But concerned students – whom Hurley also knew through D.A.R.E. – went to administration with a note that Getman had given one of them and with the information that he carried a duffel bag to school instead of his customary backpack. When the administration contacted Hurley, he found Getman – with another student – in the cafeteria and was able to arrest him without violence.

"I believe that when I made eye contact with Mr. Getman in that cafeteria, his seeing a familiar face made him think even more about what could have happened," said Hurley, the school resource officer at the Southside since September.

"I know there are critics who say it doesn't work but the whole point of D.A.R.E. is to get students in contact with police and let them know we're not the enemy," Hurley said. "I know half the student body and they know me. I think by having that component in the schools is another reason those girls came forward (with the information about Getman)."

In the past two months, the U.S. surgeon general and the National Academy of Sciences issued reports questioning the effectiveness of the program. Some research indicates the effects of the program disappear by the time students reach college.

D.A.R.E. America operates in 80 percent of U.S. school districts, reaching an estimated 36 million young people. It currently is testing a new school curriculum nationwide.

Hurley and the D.A.R.E. program had support from the prosecutor and residents of this Southern Tier city, who said all the elements combined last week to prevent to kind of school violence that has erupted at places like Columbine.

"We had a situation here where everything worked the way it should have worked," said Chemung County District Attorney John Trice. "We were very, very lucky. I think it's important that we have a school resource officer. It's through that interaction that we've been able to make our schools safer. Tom Walker graduated from Southside in 1989 and still lives across from the school. The Elmira native, a cook at the Appleby's restaurant in nearby Big Flats, loves the idea of police officer in school.

"Absolutely," he said. "I personally think it gives most students a sense of security. They don't have to worry in case something goes down because there's someone there for them."

Getman remains jailed on \$500,000 cash or \$1 million bond. He is charged with 10-felony count of first-degree criminal possession of a dangerous weapon and one count of second-degree possession of a dangerous weapon. The more serious charges carry a maximum penalty of 25 years in prison.

Trice likely will present the case to a grand jury early next month.

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