

DARE

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elementary education, Ziegler student taught and was a substitute teacher before going into law enforcement.

"I became a police officer because I wanted to help people, to make a difference in someone's life," he said. He's looking forward to combining his police skills with his college training.

"Ages 11 and 12 are a critical time for kids," he said. "They're too big to be babies any longer, but they're not yet teenagers. They must learn that it's okay to say 'no,' that they aren't 'chicken' for refusing drugs and alcohol. They're also very susceptible to some very heavy influence from television shows and movies. Having children of my own has certainly helped."

Designed in 1983 by the Los Angeles Police Department and the Los Angeles Unified School District, DARE teaches young people to make the proper choices, to say 'no' to drugs and alcohol under different circumstances without losing face. It's taught mainly in fifth grades by uniformed police officers.

Locally, Hanover, Kingston, Tunkhannock and Hazleton also send DARE officers into their schools.

Ziegler attended the rigorous DARE training course at the Patton campus of the Masonic Homes in Elizabethtown, where he was the only officer from Northeastern Pennsylvania.

"In 18 years of law enforcement, my DARE training was the finest education I've ever received," he said.

In addition to learning to effectively present the 17 classes in assertiveness, self-esteem, considering and facing the consequences of one's actions, seeing through the media's influence and avoiding drugs, tobacco, violence and gangs, the officers had to teach practice classes, both at Patton and in a real school.

"I had to teach the section on media influences to 30 uniformed

officers pretending to be fifth-graders," Ziegler said. "After that, my practice class of sixth-graders at the Ephrata Middle School was a breeze."

DARE won't be a breeze for Ziegler's students, however. They'll be required to participate in all class activities and complete a workbook in order to graduate from the course.

His face lit up as he described some of the topics he plans to cover. "Every lesson will have some type of special activity as well as other work," he said. "They'll learn, but they'll also have fun."

"This close relationship with the community is similar to the old beat cop.."

James Balavage
Kingston Twp. police chief

Ziegler said he won't simply slide through class either. "As a good teacher I have to get to know each student. They'll also get to know me, both as a police officer and the person behind the uniform, rather than just the authority figure. I know I must always tell them the truth - they'll see right through anything else. It's a good way to help break down some preconceived notions which many people have about police officers."

Bringing the DARE program to the Back Mountain has been a special goal for Kingston Township police chief James Balavage and township manager Jeff Box, who first began to explore it with the supervisors two years ago.

"Working with the young people is part of our responsibility as community police officers," Balavage said. "It's a natural link to the community and helps promote a positive relationship with the kids. They want a good relationship with us, but need the opportunity."

DARE is more than simply drug education, he added.

"We're making a commitment to the community to use all our resources to attack its problems and help kids build their self-esteem. It's pro-active, a partnership between the police and the residents to define and discuss community problems and enlist all available resources to begin solving them instead of simply referring people to social agencies and walking away."

DARE is a proven method which helps officers and the community begin to trust one another and work together, Balavage said. Police in communities with established DARE programs tend to see fewer youth problems, an improved relationship with the entire community and more arrests as people become less reluctant to come forward and report suspicious activity to police, he said.

"The residents must see that the police are not only their friends, but also the guys in charge of the neighborhood," Balavage said. "This close relationship with the community is similar to the old beat cop, who knew everyone and had a good official relationship with the people who lived in the area he walked every day. It's unfortunate that not all communities can attain this goal, but the Back Mountain certainly can if it wants to."

Ziegler was one of two applicants for the DARE officer position. Balavage said he selected him on the basis of his education, experience, ability to communicate with young people and interest in them. Being a father also helped.

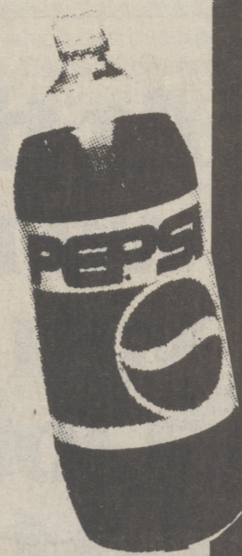
"This police department has made a commitment to our community," Balavage said. "Now we hope it will respond to our efforts, through parents, teachers, political leaders, religious groups and our business leaders."



POST PHOTO/GRACE R. DOVE

Kingston Township patrolman Frank Ziegler, chief James Balavage and sergeant Michael Moravec introduce the new DARE program's mascot, "DARE-n" the lion, to the community. DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) will be taught to all fifth-graders in the Dallas school district starting in January.

Welcome!



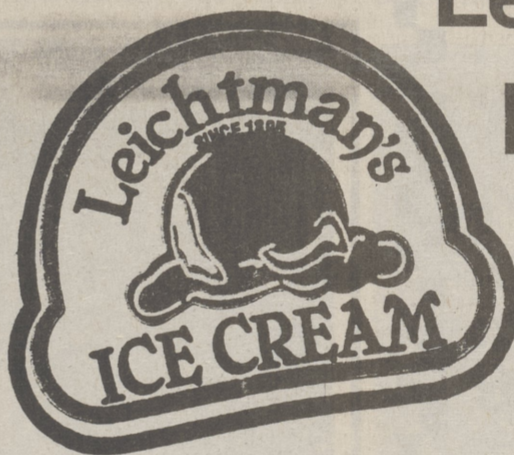
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