SHARING IDEAS & RESOURCES

to Keep Our Nation's Schools Safe!

VOLUME IV

NLECTC
National Law Enforcement and
Corrections Technology Center System

JTIC
Justice Technology
Information Center

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Visit http://www.schoolsafetyinfo.org for access to up-to-date publication and website resources. New success stories similar to the ones in this publication are added on an ongoing basis. To suggest a success story topic, contact Senior Writer Becky Lewis at rebecca.l.lewis@leidos.com

INTRODUCTION

Apps. Databases. Tiplines. Videos. Educational campaigns. Throughout the United States, schools, law enforcement agencies and communities keep on coming together, continuing to create innovative and groundbreaking solutions to the persistent problems of violence, bullying, security breaches, gang tensions and social media abuse.

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and the Justice Technology Information Center (JTIC), part of the National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center (NLECTC) System, bring you more of these solutions in this fourth volume of *Sharing Ideas and Resources to Keep Our Nation's Schools Safe*. We want you to know about the people who are searching for, and finding, positive ways to address these problems. We want to tell you about the technologies and strategies that are working across the country, and we want to hear from you about what's going on in your area. In addition to the success stories that fill the three previous volumes in this series, we continually post new ones on SchoolSafetyInfo.org, the JTIC website dedicated to school safety news, information and technology. In addition to downloadable files of Volumes I, II and III, our site includes links to a wide range of resources and materials produced at the federal, state and association levels, and provides access to school safety-related publications and videos from NIJ and the NLECTC System. You can also learn about School Safe – JTIC's Security and Safety Assessment App for Schools, and obtain instructions on how to download it.

In this fourth volume, you will read about an educational video on cybersafety produced by a concerned law enforcement officer in Georgia; new approaches to training implemented by the Indiana State Police and the campus police at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst; a free campus safety app developed by a team of students at the University of Michigan; an educational campaign produced by high school students in Connecticut; and a number of other school-community-law enforcement collaborative projects.

We encourage you to investigate and decide what is right for you and what has a place in your school setting. First responders, school staff, students, parents and

community leaders continue to work cooperatively to combat the myriad safety issues that affect our nation's schools and provide safe and healthy environments in which to learn. As your schools and your communities work together with local public safety professionals to do the same, we hope that you will continue to use NIJ, JTIC and SchoolSafetyInfo.org as resources..

Sincerely,

Lance Miller
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CHAPTER 1

PROTECT YOUR SCHOOL....
WITH THE LAUNCH OF AN APP

By Becky Lewis
October 2015

Download JTIC's Security and Safety Assessment App for Schools, the new app from the National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center (NLECTC) that takes you step-by-step through your school to identify and address trouble spots. You can conduct a physical assessment of your campus — inside and out — by walking around and answering a series of simple questions using your hand-held device.

This free app, available for iOS and Android, helps promote awareness and foster prevention using Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles, and allows school resource officers (SROs), school administrators and other first responders to receive no-cost emergency planning assistance without leaving campus.

"Keeping schools safe is a top priority and everyone in the school community has a part to play. School Safe – JTIC's Security and Safety Assessment App for Schools helps school resource officers and administrators take a good look at their schools, inside and out. It points out trouble spots and reinforces good practices," says Sean Burke, president of the School Safety Advocacy Council and school safety consultant with the NLECTC System. "The app presents the pertinent questions for you to consider as you assess the safety of your campus."

Divided into 10 sections, School Safe – JTIC's Security and Safety Assessment App for Schools begins by helping users summarize a school's demographics and assessment history, then examines various internal and external considerations. For example:

- Is student access to parking areas restricted to arrival and dismissal times?

- Are trailers/portable classrooms connected to the school's central alarm system?

- Is exterior lighting checked on a frequent basis? Is school staff encouraged to report outages? Are poles in the parking lot numbered to assist individuals who report?

- Do visitors present a photo ID to be scanned through a records checking system before they are issued a visitor badge that must be visibly worn at all times? Must visitors check out when they leave?

- Does the school have pre-prepared To-Go Bags? Does each classroom have a To-Go Bag? What do they include?

Users can start assessments and return to complete them at their convenience, and School Safe allows them to attach a photograph of the school. The app generates an easy-to-read report in PDF format that can be shared with supervising officers, school system administrators and other stakeholders. School Safe – JTIC's Security and Safety Assessment App for Schools can generate assessments on multiple schools, and users can update existing assessments with new information, allowing for easy retrieval and storage in a central location.

"School Safe– JTIC's Security and Safety Assessment App for Schools can be your partner in performing a thorough assessment of your facilities," Burke says.
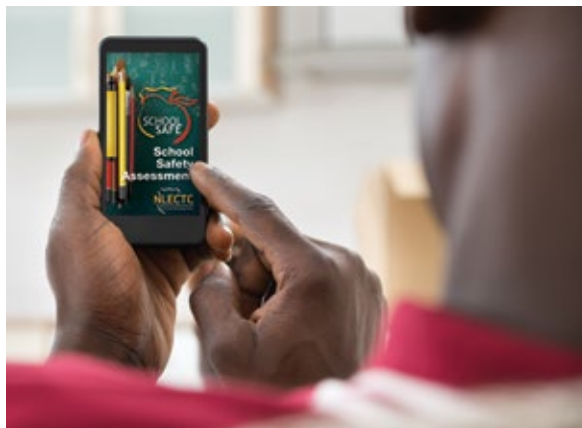
A Beta Tester Says "Thumbs Up"
By Jon E. Carrier

As a beta tester and contributor to School Safe – JTIC's Security and Safety Assessment App for Schools, I found the app easy to understand and believe it can be easily used by most practitioners.

One of the great things about School Safe– JTIC's Security and Safety Assessment App for Schools is that there were contributors from all over our country working in the area of school safety who gave feedback and opinions that helped inform the content.

I found that even to an experienced school safety assessor like myself who has conducted many school security surveys, School Safe – JTIC's Security and Safety Assessment App for Schools proved cost-effective, relevant and full of good questions in a format that was easily understandable and user-friendly. The end product easily translates to a printed report for the user.

School Safe – JTIC's Security and Safety Assessment App for Schools takes into consideration Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles and poses relevant questions for assessors – for example, it includes questions about video cameras, signage and visitor check-in systems. In conclusion, if you are a school administrator, school security director, school security officer or a law enforcement officer working in the area of school safety, School Safe - JTIC's Security and Safety Assessment App for Schools is a valuable addition to your professional tools.

Jon E. Carrier is the current president of the Maryland Association of School Resource Officers (MASRO), a member of the Executive Board of Directors of the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) and a full-time school resource officer with the Anne Arundel County Police Department in Maryland. Anne Arundel County Public Schools are ranked No. 42 on the list of largest school districts in the United States according to the 2014 American School & University Top 100 (http://asumag.com/research/2014-asu-100-largest-school-districts-us-enrollment-2012-13).

To receive your free copy of School Safe – JTIC's Security and Safety Assessment App for Schools, visit https://www.justnet.org/SchoolSafe/ to request a code that will allow secure download to one device. The app is available for both IOS and Android. School Safe – JTIC's Security and Safety Assessment App for Schools is available only to vetted criminal justice professionals and school administrators; please make your request from an official agency email address, not from a personal email address.

UMASS-AMHERST ACTIVE THREAT TRAINING TEACHES A NEW WAY OF THINKING

By Becky Lewis
November 2015

911, what's your emergency?

I'm in Dickinson. There's a shooter. I heard shots in the next classroom. Send the police, hurry!

I need your location, where are you?

I'm in Dickinson, send them NOW. I'm going to hide. Hurry!

But where…Oh no, she's gone. I don't where she is.

In Amherst, Mass., birthplace of poet Emily Dickinson, there are five institutions of higher education: University of Massachusetts-Amherst and Amherst, Smith, Mt. Holyoke and Hampshire Colleges. Every one of them has a Dickinson Hall.

Knowing your physical location – not just by name, but by address – is just one of the takeaways the UMass-Amherst Police Department wants to impart to students and faculty during Active Threat Training. The 90-minute program, offered on request, includes a 20-minute video and related discussion with an overall goal, according to community policing Officer Brian Kellogg, of "sending you away with more questions than you had when you came."

"We tell them we're not there to give them the answers. Rather, we want them to think about what the answers could be," Kellogg says. "We try to go over what the options are, but it's ultimately up to you to decide what you will do."

UMass-Amherst uses a three-pronged approach: Get Out, Hide Out/Keep Out and Take Out. It has similarities to the Run Hide Fight approach, but is based on "Shots Fired: When Lightning Strikes," a video produced by the Center for Personal Protection and Safety.

Officers start the post-video discussion by comparing active threat training to fire safety: "Everything here where we're sitting is fire-rated and on every corner there's a map on how to get out, and there are fire alarms on every corner. We ask if anybody can tell us the last time someone was killed in a school-related fire, and it's been about 70 years. Then we ask if anybody can name the last time there was an active shooter, and unfortunately, you usually only have to go back about a week."

"In the vast majority of active threat situations, those that are killed are still sitting in their chairs. There's been no decision to act," Kellogg adds. "We want them to learn to look at this through the eyes of survival. At Virginia Tech, for example, there was one classroom where students jumped from a second-floor window and survived, and another where they barricaded the door and then lay down on the floor. He did shoot through the door, but he hit no one."

One of the first questions asked during the training is what would participants do first when faced with an active threat, and the standard answer is call 911. When asked who they're calling, some participants said that call would go to the campus police; others, to the Amherst Police Department. However, if they're calling from a cell phone, as is likely, the call goes to the Massachusetts State Police, and in the hypothetical situation that starts this article, it's not easy to determine a caller's physical location from a brief cell call. Therefore, "it might be best to just have us on speed dial. That's just part of what we call pre-planning."

Pre-planning also emphasizes having a safe evacuation route in mind and knowing a secure location if you need to hide: "We were training a group of custodians in the campus center, and we gave them a hypothetical situation where there was a shooter right outside the restaurant. We asked them how they would evacuate and they said – as we knew they would – they would use a stairway near the training room. We asked them where that stairway came out, and only one or two had ever used it and knew that it came out right in front of the restaurant – directly in the shooter's path."

To help participants avoid such outcomes, the training encourages awareness of and familiarity with surroundings. While the video plays, Kellogg and his colleagues scout the area near the training room, and then come back with questions such as:

- Where would you go to lock the doors and be completely secure? Does the nearby copy room have a deadbolt? What about the restroom?

- If you're in your office and can't go out the door, how would you break a window? If there's nothing in your office now that would break a window, what could you put there that you could use: a brick, a toolkit with a ballpeen hammer?

- Think about which way the doors open. Barricades are little help if the doors open out and don't lock.

- Are there shades on the windows, and if not, what other way might you cover them?

"We can't cover every possible situation that might occur, but we can train you to think in an entirely different way. We make them think through the options. Time is the most important factor in managing this type of situation, and pre-planning gives you your best chances of surviving," Kellogg says.

"When it comes to 'Take Out,' we do answer a lot of questions about self-defense and ways to improvise an attack," he says. An important scenario addressed by the training at this point goes something like this:

- You hid behind the door, hit him in the face and he dropped the gun. Now he's getting up: What do you do? You may need to hit him again, and this time, hit him hard enough to render him unconscious.

- You get some people who say 'I've had military training," or "I know how to handle a gun, I'm going to pick it up and hold him at gunpoint." The police are coming to look for a shooter. They'll come through the door quickly and see someone pointing a gun. Are they going to give you time to explain or will you end up getting shot? Is your best bet to not have a gun in your hand?

"We tell them the media covers school shootings massively, but school shootings are not the highest risk. Your chances are actually greater of being involved in active threat situation in public areas like in a mall or an open food court somewhere, and you can apply this training when you're at work, when you're at school or even when you're at home," Kellogg adds.

To read about the Active Threat Training in more detail, visit https://www.umass. edu/umpd/active-threat-program. For more information on how UMass-Amherst developed the program and lessons learned, contact Officer Brian Kellogg at bkellogg@admin.umass.edu.

TRAINING PROGRAM AIMS TO CHANGE THE PARADIGM

By Becky Lewis
September 2015

The sound of gunfire brings the math quiz to a halt, far faster than the effect of a "pencils down" command. As a second shot follows the first, there is no hesitation on the part of the teacher or her students: they've practiced and planned, and they know that as soon as she checks her cellphone for a text message that may give them the location of the intruder, they're either running for the stairs at the end of the hall or piling desks in front of the door.

One path to fostering that sense of readiness in a school's students and staff lies through Active Shooter Preparedness Training offered by the Indiana State Police (ISP). The agency's full training package, including a Microsoft® PowerPoint presentation, presenter's notes, a lesson plan and several videos, can be accessed and downloaded via the ISP website.

Sgt. Chris Kath of the ISP's school safety program explains that the agency recently revised and expanded this curriculum to make it more specific and user-friendly: "Our intention is that not only can an Indiana State trooper go in and use it to give presentations, but that a police officer in another state can also use the training materials as well."

In fact, it was a presentation by an officer from another state, F/Sgt. Kenneth Runk of the Maryland State Police at the 2013 National Association for Pupil Transportation, that gave Kath the idea to develop videos that train bus drivers on how to handle an active shooter situation (See "Video Training Encourages Bus Drivers to Plan for Safety," https://schoolsafetyinfo.org/indiana.html.) These videos, which can also be used independently, make up one component of the expanded training package.

Moving from the original training's basic concept of "Run, Hide, Fight" in 2013 to the expanded 2015 version, Dr. Richard Hogue, program content developer, used suggestions and input from participants and trainers from more than 150 training sessions to modify the program to its present form. The ISP package expands on those concepts and adds a Prevention component because "we feel like prevention is always the best option. The program identifies early warning indicators and encourages schools to set up intervention teams that can monitor and assist troubled individuals. And in the event that an incident does occur, planning and practicing are key. We know that law enforcement and educators will give their lives to save children, but we are not asking them to die for the children in their charge. Quite the contrary, we ask them to exercise these response options so they can live to protect those in their charge."

"We're trying to teach people to think more like law enforcement officers do, to be aware of their surroundings. As a police officer, when I go to a restaurant, I don't sit with my back to the door. I pay attention to what's going on around me. We need administrators, teachers and bus drivers to prepare the same way," Kath says. "If you look back at Columbine and other shootings, a lot of the victims were those who just froze and did nothing. We firmly believe if you're prepared and you have a plan beforehand, if you know what you're going to do if something like that happens, you stand a better chance of living through it."

In order to help people improve those chances of living, the training expands on the "Run Hide Fight" options, starting with adding "Escape" to the Run component. Hogue says the objective is not for students and staff to run blindly (possibly straight toward the shooter), but rather to make intelligent and well-planned decisions that lead to a controlled escape.

"Then in the second component, we've added "Lockdown" to Hide because we want people to do specific things, like barricading doors and taking cover, as opposed to just hiding. We've found that people who just hide aren't as safe as they think they are," he says. "And under Fight, we've expanded that with information on how to improvise weapons and how to figure out strategic locations to gain the advantage of surprise."

All of these expanded components come together to foster greater cooperation between law enforcement and educators, as presenting the training gives officers an opportunity to become familiar with a facility and its staff, and it also gives educators an opportunity to interact directly with law enforcement.

"This program's overall objective is to change the paradigm, to provide prevention strategies and response options. In addition to that, another big thing that really sets it apart from some of the other programs out there is that we filmed

the video in Indiana schools with Indiana students and teachers, rather than using actors," Hogue says. "You don't find many active shooter videos that are both school-specific and deal with the components of Run, Hide, Fight. Most of those trainings instead seem to focus on the workplace."

Because of the scarcity of similar products, ISP has received inquiries from all over the country, and Hogue says "it's great to be able to tell them it's free when they ask how much it's going to cost them. There's something that the Indiana State Police should be really proud of."

"There are companies out there that train individuals for a profit, but we're a public service agency and we're doing this for free. We're putting it out there for any school or any law enforcement officer that wants to improve school safety," Kath says.

And he emphasizes that plans for improvement always need to take school policies into consideration: "We are advocating that they plan, and if they see flaws in the policy, address them now. The fact of the matter is, schools know their jobs better than we do. We're just coming in and showing them the law enforcement perspective."

To review and download the training program, visit http://www.in.gov/isp/ 3191.htm.

CHAPTER 4

FREE ONLINE TRAINING PROMOTES SAFE SPORTS EVENTS

By Becky Lewis
June 2015

There's that angry voice again, the one cursing at the opposing team and the officials. Ah, there he is, with the red jacket… and the red face.

At the approach of the slight woman in the "Event Staff" vest, the man becomes even more belligerent, shouting "What do YOU want?" in her direction.

"'I'm sorry to disturb you, sir, but you seem upset. Can I help you with something?"

Although the soft approach might seem to many people to be the wrong way to address this problem, according to free online training on staffing sporting events, as often as not it succeeds in immediately calming unruly spectators down, thus averting fights that could end up erupting to involve the entire crowd. When this approach doesn't succeed, event workers who've completed the Safe Sports Zone training have learned other alternatives to use to try to defuse the situation. The training also addresses many other ways they can help keep games safe and fun for spectators and teams alike, including stopping trouble at the gate, building positive relationships with students and other fans, and being aware of potential trouble "hot spots" such as the concession stand at halftime (for more details, see sidebar, "7 Steps to Event Success.")

"We train them to handle a crowd by breaking it into sections and scanning each section every 30 seconds. We want them always looking up into the crowd and always thinking. We teach them to look for anger issues, to identify loud voices. It's usually just one or two people who get out of control and start trouble. We teach them to identify potential troublemakers by what they're wearing and remember that, because sometimes they move. And we teach them to defuse anger," says Jay Hammes, former athletic director at William Horlick High School in Racine, Wis., and creator of Safe Sports Zone.

Training also covers paying attention to behavior, rather than profiling by physical characteristics: event workers learn to watch spectators' hands and eyes, looking for people who keep their hands out of sight or who constantly scan the area as if looking for an escape route. It's all part of working to make events safe and enjoyable for everyone.

"If you go to a school, any school, during the day, you have to show a photo ID. When the dismissal bell rings, that policy stops, and yet education through activities continues, in fine arts and drama as well as in sports. The fact is, you have more visitors coming in after the dismissal bell than during the school day," Hammes says. "Too often in this country, we wait until there's a tragedy and then react instead of doing something proactive."

It was reaction to a near-tragedy that led Hammes to develop Horlick High's sports event training program, which eventually became Safe Sports Zone. In 2003, Hammes left an away basketball game where his school held a comfortable lead, and walked into gunfire, "with bullets whizzing past my ear and hitting the mortar behind me." Although police never determined whether Hammes was the intended victim or just in the wrong place at the wrong time, it changed the way the Racine school approached athletic events.

"I went back to school on the following Monday and gathered our troops together. We came up with a good plan, and my colleagues from other schools started to say, 'you need to share this,' " Hammes says.

Safe Sports Zone offers the training component online for free (there is a cost for in-person training), and users incur no obligation to use the website's other services. Hammes hopes that school superintendents and principals who learn about the online training will make it a requirement for their staff members. In addition to the one-hour video component, the package includes a download-able syllabus and a post-test that results in certification by the National Inter-scholastic Athletic Administrators Association. (The present form of the training flows continuously rather than being segmented into separate lessons, but a free 10-part mobile app version is in development.)

One administrator who would like to see it included with required training in his state and area is Kent Doades, athletic director and assistant principal at North Knox Junior/Senior High School in Knox County, Ind. Doades participated in a Safe Sports Zone training session at a conference in May 2015, came back and completed the online training, and not only encouraged his own school's coaching staff to take it, he also recommended the training to the Indiana state athletic directors' association as a course that could be included among those that coaches statewide can take to meet training requirements.

7 Steps to Event Success

According to the free online training, there are seven steps involved in promoting safety at afterschool sporting events:

1. **Select the Event Management Team.** Members of the team should include the public address announcer, local law enforcement, legal representation, administrators and trainers. Tips include dressing alike, possibly with custom t-shirts or vests; standing up during games; and not using personal cell phones during an event.

2. **Develop a Master Plan for the Event Management.** Consider possibilities such as bad weather, fire and fights. Plan how to evacuate the area. Develop drills and practice repeatedly.

3. **Protect the Gate.** Emphasize Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles when possible in renovations and design; possibly institute visual searches and the use of cameras, and consider increasing lighting to deter crime.

4. **Build Positive Relationships with Students and Fans.** Emphasize that attending high school events is a privilege, not a right. However, event workers need to understand that meeting anger with anger does not work, and early intervention plays an important role in de-escalating tension.

5. **Be Aware of Hot Spots.** Increase presence at areas known for tension, such as the concession stand at halftime and the parking lot after the game.

6. **Define Spectator Parameters.**

7. **Identify All Fans.** Require photo IDs from all spectators, both students and parents. Many schools that have instituted this policy have seen a decline in fights and criminal activity.

Safe Sports Zone provides bulk shipments of free posters that can help promote safe sports activities to the executive directors of state athletic directors associations; contact the office in your state to find out more.

"This was the first training I'd found related to afterschool and sports events. As athletic director, I have to supervise every school sports event, and I picked up some good tips on different ways to maintain security at sporting events," Doades says. "One thing I can do right away is have more bodies and more eyes at our events. Currently it's me, our principal, our other assistant principal and our SRO. Having more staff at our events and giving us a few more pairs of eyes would be pretty easy to implement."

At North Knox, a 600-student, grades 7-12 consolidated school serving several small towns, most of the school's coaching staff can be found in attendance at football games, and "if they've taken the training, they will know what to watch for even if they aren't there as paid staff."

According to the training, there are more than 18,000 schools in this country that offer afterschool activities, and if each school averages 25 individuals involved in coaching and monitoring those activities, that means nearly a half-million people work at afterschool sporting events, most of them with little or no training.

"Budgets have been slashed and public schools in particular are hurting. The lack of training is not caused by apathy, it's caused by a lack of money," Hammes says. "People say you can always find the money, but you can't. We're not in this for the money, we're trying to help schools, and that's why we're offering the free training."

To access the free online training, visit http://safesportzone.telspanexam.com/. The program received national recognition from the National Center for Spectator Sports Safety and Security in 2013.

VIDEO ENCOURAGES PARENTS TO TEACH "DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP"

By Becky Lewis
February 2016

The headlines seem to repeat themselves, day after day: Sexting Scandal Hits Local High School. Dangerous Challenge Trending on Social Media. Teens Face Criticism for Insensitive Video Gone Viral.

To many parents, it might seem the answer is to take away the smartphones, recycle the tablets and ban access to the family computer.

Digital Safety in the Wireless World (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8xhf5L-hBQfw), produced by the Paulding County (Ga.) Sheriff's Office, lets them know there's another way.

The 12-minute video, written and narrated by Det. Lenny Carr, uses a two-part approach to facing social media challenges: First, educate your children about online dangers, then teach them digital citizenship.

"There was a time when kids went to certain places to hang out, to be with their friends and to be cool. Now the hangouts are virtual, and if you ban your kids completely, they'll be left out," he says.

"And they'll find a way to get online anyway."

Instead, Carr advocates letting children and teens earn trust by proving they can responsibly use social media in a limited fashion, then increasing their privileges in incremental steps, similar to first letting them walk alone on their home street, then later allowing them to leave the immediate area on their own. Along the way, parents should monitor their behavior, and they might even consider entering into a "contract" outlining both parties' social media responsibilities.

That's the message Carr had been presenting throughout Paulding County (located in suburban Atlanta) in parent education seminars for several years. His presentation first explains to parents many of the ways in which their children have access to the entire world from their bedrooms, then talks about how they can guide their children to responsible social media use. In early 2015, his supervisor in the Crimes Against Children Unit, Lt. Starry Kilgore, tasked him with creating a video to help spread that message even further. Carr worked with the Board of Commissioners government access station, Paulding County Today and Jody Martin, media production coordinator for PCTtv, and subcontracted with local videographer Jeffrey Harkins, then spent several months researching, writing and refining his message.

The resulting script for *Digital Safety in the Wireless World* addresses issues such as:

• Parents need to realize that granting their children unsupervised online access means that they are figuratively letting their children lock their bedroom doors and leave their homes without telling their parents where they're going.

- Taking and posting selfies can be problematic, even if they aren't explicit. Geocoding gives an individual's exact location, and the posts often tell who else is with someone. Selfies may even give away information that could lead to home burglaries.

- There are myriad social media apps available, and the ones youth prefer change constantly. However, there are excellent apps that parents can use to monitor and control online behavior, and they should be alert for potential problems such as cyberbullying and gang recruitment.

The video resulting from these efforts went up on YouTube in early December, and although it's too soon to tell, Carr hopes it results in a reduction in the number of calls he gets from concerned parents.

"Parents call me and say 'Here's what is going on with my kids and their smart-phones,' and they ask what they should do. I'd much rather get that kind of call than 'I found naked pictures on my kid's phone,' but if they have found photos like that, taking everything away is not the answer. They need to set ground rules and work to re-establish trust and responsible behavior," he says. "I've studied the tools that are out there, especially the free tools that help you put filters on smartphones and Wi-Fi. A lot of parents don't understand how easy

that is and that they don't need to pay for professional help. There are ways they can protect themselves and their children, and when I point out these filters can also help protect them from identity theft and even burglaries, that really gets their attention."

Although Carr now asks his parent callers/visitors if they've seen the video, he's also going to do more than wait for them to find it online: "I see this as a nice tool to have for in-person presentations too. When I go to up-coming events in the schools in March and April, my plan is to play the video, then expand on it in my presentation."

Also, Sgt. Ashley Henson, Paulding County's public information officer, reached out to the local school system, which first reviewed the video and then contacted parents via robo-call and an email with a link to encourage them to watch it. And the project doesn't end here: Carr plans to develop a second video targeting "tweens and teens," once again calling on informative resources that include an informal focus group of local youth, Lt. Kilgore, Sheriff Gary Gulledge and the Georgia Bureau of Investigation. (GBI recognized Carr for "his exemplary service in keeping our children safe from online predators" in December 2015.)

For more information on the project, contact Sgt. Ashley Henson, Public Information Officer, Paulding County Sheriff's Office, at (770) 505-5535 or email ashley.henson@paulding.gov.

SPK UP NC OFFERS ANONYMOUS WAY TO HELP

By Becky Lewis
April 2016

Speak Up for Your Friends.

Speak Up for Yourself.

Speak Up for the Voiceless.

Speak Up for School Safety.

See It. Tip It. Stop It.

Those are the messages being pushed out to teens in North Carolina encouraging use of the state's new tipline, SPK UP NC: messages created by teens, for teens, to encourage use in the 42 schools that make up the pilot project area, and by the end of the 2016-2017 school year, in schools throughout the state.

A project of the North Carolina Center for Safer Schools, the app development grew out of school and community forums held shortly after the Center opened in 2013. A concern consistently raised at those meetings was a need for students to have a truly anonymous, standardized method of reporting concerns to school resource officers, school administrators and teachers. The Center invested 18 months in developing SPK UP NC, and students played a key role throughout that development process.

Kym Martin, executive director of the center and a participant in the National Institute of Justice Comprehensive School Safety Initiative Topical Working Group on State School Safety Issues meeting held in February 2016, says Center staff realized early in the process that unless students actually used the state's new app, it would prove of little use to the state's schools. In addition to creating a 25-member advisory group made up of students from throughout the state, the Center named Kolby Holland, an 18-year-old senior at South Lenoir High School and a Governor-appointed member of the Safer Schools Task Force, as its leader. The group's members named the app, had input into product design and came up with their own marketing messages. (To view their testimonial promotional videos, including one from a girl whose classmate brought a gun to school, visit https://www.ncdps.gov/DPS-Services/Center-for-Safer-Schools/Resources/For-Students/spk-nc.)

"I have three teenagers, my deputy director has two teenagers, the project manager from our IT company has teenagers, and we all knew, because of what we heard from our families, that we had to be sensitive to what students would like and the ways in which they would use it," Martin says. "We brought the students to Raleigh for the focus group meetings and tried to make it interesting for them with lunch and tours of the governor's mansion and state government buildings. We really wanted to make the development process and the app itself as student friendly as possible."

Part of that effort includes emphasizing that the purpose of SPK UP NC is not to get other students into trouble; rather, it is, as the student-created hashtag says, a way of giving a voice to the voiceless, Martin says: "Students can use it to help others who can't speak up for themselves. They could potentially save a

life if someone is considering suicide or self harm. A lot of students are afraid of saying anything, and we hope that when they see student-driven messages, they will realize SPK UP NC is a safe way to report."

And the app not only provides a safe way to report in English, it also translates Spanish and other languages into English-language messages that SROs and administrators can understand. (The promotional campaign includes a Spanish-language testimonial video and a special outreach component for Spanish-speaking students and their families.)

Although it's safe and anonymous, Martin does emphasize that SPK UP NC isn't meant to replace relationships of trust students may have already developed with their SROs, guidance counselors or teachers: "If you feel comfortable talking with a trusted adult, you should continue to do that. This is just another way you can get information into the right hands."

Because students can use SPK UP NC anonymously to put information into their hands, some school administrators initially voiced concerns they would be swamped with tips, but so far, the pilot schools have found the load to be manageable. A majority of the tips received through April 2016 focus on bullying, drug use and alcohol abuse, but enough tips have also come in about inappropriate verbal behavior between faculty and students to cause Center

staff to consider developing training in that area. The Center is also developing guidelines and procedures for school districts that already have an anonymous reporting tool of their own in place, although those districts are also encouraged to consider switching to SPK UP NC. The North Carolina General Assembly has mandated that all schools must have some type of anonymous reporting in place by the end of the 2016-2017 school year, and for schools that choose to participate, SPK UP NC offers a number of key features:

- Works on computers, laptops, tablets and smartphones.

- Capable of including attached photos and videos.

- Able to understand tips submitted in 32 different languages.

- By state law, all data collected using SPK UP NC is exempt from the public records law.

"I have grand hopes for this," Martin says. "I hope it will help students to be good citizens, and when they become adults, they'll be community changers and world changers because they've learned that when you get involved, good things happen."

For more information, visit http://speakupapp.tips/home.php or contact Kym Martin at (919) 324-6380, email kym.martin@ncdps.gov.

RUTGERS TAKES SIMPLE APPROACH TO "TEXT A TIP"

By Becky Lewis
March 2016

Say Jen, that package…wasn't it sitting in the same place yesterday when we walked to class?

You're right, Latisha…it's kind of suspicious, isn't it? Maybe we should let the police know? I left my phone in my room, use yours and send them a photo. They'll check it out.

Don't you need an app for that? I never downloaded it…I don't even know what it's called!

You don't need an app…didn't you see the online article the other day? Just send them a text. The photo will go straight to dispatch, and then right out to the cops on patrol. They'll be here in a couple of minutes.

At the Rutgers University New Brunswick campus, sending a tip or a question to the University Police Department really is just that simple. Launched on February 5, the system received 200 messages in its first month of use, ranging from a photo of a suspicious package to requests for security escorts to questions about if bad weather had closed the campus, and Chief Kenneth Cop believes the text messaging system already has been a benefit to the university's public safety.

Under the pilot program (tentatively planned for expansion to the Camden and Newark campuses later this year), students, staff and faculty can text a message directly to dispatch by sending "RUNB" and the body of the message to 69050. Messages go directly to the Communications Center and receive an immediate response from a trained dispatcher.

"It's very easy to use. Basically, one of the screens turns a different color, indicating there's a message in the queue, and they respond to it by initiating a normal text message conversation. If they determine it's appropriate, they can broadcast the messages out to the officers who are on patrol," Cop says. "From the students' perspective, it's instantaneous. They don't have to load anything to their smartphones, it's just a matter of sending a text message."

Believed to be one of the first – if not the very first – systems of this type in the nation, Rutgers' text-a-tip had its origins in a text-messaging application used only during football games. The university's Student Government Association then approached the police department out of concern for campus safety, suggesting expansion to Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings. Cop says his department felt it would be more appropriate to go to a 24/7 system, and the idea took off from there.

"We have very good rapport with our SGA. We met with the president and talked about how to develop a safety application that would meet our needs. We looked at a couple of apps that were commercially available and decided that, hands down, what was important was the ability to communicate via text, so we decided to go with a simpler approach," Cop says. The SGA provided the necessary funds to develop the project.

"It's a modern way to communicate and we want to be a part of that. The No. 1 thing is having an open line of communication with the community in terms of being able to send and receive messages. Better communication means more and better information," Cop says.

Although the primary users of the system are students, the entire Rutgers community can use it to send in tips and photos, or ask questions. The system initially has drawn publicity from the university and local media, and in the future, will be pushed out to incoming students as part of orientation. Cop says it's anybody's guess how much use all that promotion will generate, but the department is prepared for a large volume of messages. And word has already spread to other universities, who have approached Rutgers to find out more about how the system works.

"They're attracted by the simplicity and the desire to get into the modern age of communication. Texting is a modern way to communicate and other universities are seeing that, and they want to be a part of it," he says.

For more information, contact Melissa Marrero, Director of Public Relations, Marketing & Communications, at (848) 932-4956, email mmarrero@aps.rutgers.edu

PROJECT SAFE CAMPUS GIVES STUDENTS A VOICE

By Becky Lewis
February 2016

He struck back against an eighth-grade bully. He was the one who was disciplined.

Because he had an exemplary record, he received probation and stayed in school.

Scenarios similar to this one probably play out in schools around the country every week, maybe even every day. The one described briefly above actually happened to a boy more than 30 years ago, a boy who

grew up to have an eight-season National Basketball Association career, but who never forgot what it felt like to be a victim who had nowhere to turn. When Crime Stoppers of Michigan approached Willie Burton to ask for his help in promoting a pilot initiative to allow students to submit tips on a variety of school-related issues, including bullying, he was quick to say yes to becoming project manager for Project Safe Campus. The pilot project – a joint effort among Crime Stoppers, local law enforcement and participating schools – started in 20 schools in Detroit and received 43 tips in the first 60 days of use in 2015.

"Project Safe Campus has been an asset to the Detroit Public Schools Police Department. Not only have they helped in our crime reduction and investigation efforts, but we have been able to act on tips identifying troubled students, some of whom were even contemplating suicide, and the district was able to intervene before a tragedy occurred. The Project Safe Campus model also helps to instill in students a sense of empowerment and personal responsibility that will serve them well throughout their lives," says Assistant Chief Craig W. Schwartz.

By the end of 2015, Project Safe Campus had spread from Detroit to more than 300 schools in eight counties. Students can submit tips to Project Safe Campus by calling 1-800-SPEAK-UP, by texting 274637 or by going online to www.1800speakup.org. The system preserves anonymity by sending calls to Canada, where they are scrambled, then sent back to staff for processing.

"It hit close to home with me because in 1981, I was on the verge of being expelled because I retaliated against someone who made it a point to make my day miserable," Burton says. "Because of that, I wanted to empower the small persons. I wanted to give them a way to report the things they saw, but couldn't talk about without putting themselves in further jeopardy."

Burton says Crime Stoppers of Michigan has provided all funding needed for the pilot program, and Project Safe Campus will begin to seek other funding sources to expand the program throughout more of the state.

"This is a student-led initiative, we're just here to manage it for them," he says. "They're reporting everything you can think of, from arson to fights, from cyberbullying to theft. Suicide is really big. Some of these tips have been very valuable. Students have been taken to the hospital and their lives saved because they attempted suicide and someone reported it."

Patricia A. Murray, former principal of East English Village Preparatory Academy, credited Project Safe Campus with allowing her security team to stop a potentially dangerous situation: "We were able to curtail a potentially dangerous situation recently when one of our students called in a tip about a possible confrontation involving several students that was rumored to go down at our school. We were able to have security and administration in place to keep an eye out and to prevent anything from happening. Project Safe Campus allows our students to feel safe to call and report wrong doings without the negative stigma of being a 'snitch'."

The project does allow students to collect a reward of up to $100 for an actionable tip; in order to maintain confidentiality, callers receive an ID number to use to track the progress of the tip and claim any reward. However, Burton says that 97 percent of those eligible never claim the money, which may then be awarded to a school's student government fund instead: "They just want to help, they're not doing it for the money."

To find out more, visit http://projectsafecampus.com/.

CHAPTER 9

A "COMPANION" TO
SEE YOU SAFELY HOME

By Becky Lewis
September 2015

Glancing at the time on her phone, she realizes the library closed five minutes ago, and that means her roommate should be on her way home. Just as she begins to worry about her friend's safety, she receives a push message: On the other side of the campus, her roommate has opened the app that sent out the push, a message that asks her to be her friend's virtual "companion" as she walks home. She answers yes, and the worry dissolves, because as a virtual companion, she will know where her roommate is on every step of her way to safety.

Companion, a free mobile app available in both iPhone and Android versions, allows users to place family and friends on a contact list whose members receive requests to act as virtual companions whenever the app is opened. Accepting a request links them to an interactive map that shows the user virtually walking a designated route. In the meantime, the user simply drops the phone into a pocket and starts moving, keeping aware of surroundings and letting Companion (and the virtual companions) keep an eye on things as well.

Companion detects changes in movement created by actions such as running or falling, deviations from the designated route and disconnects between headphones and jack. When activated by any of these triggers, Companion immediately asks the user "OK?" If 15 seconds pass without a response, the app alerts the designated companion(s) the user may be in trouble; simultaneously turns the phone into a noisy personal alarm; and, if the user attends a college or university that collaborates with the app, instantly notifies campus police/security. (The user, if able, may also call 911.)

Version 2.0.3, released in August 2015 to a worldwide market, has received extensive national and international publicity. The resulting hundreds of thousands of downloads in a short time has been a startling and welcome surge of growth for the team of University of Michigan students that created the app in 2014. Lexie Ernst, a co-founder and business major, says a group of friends were bouncing around ideas about what they could do to address the important issue of campus safety by leveraging technology, and they came up with the idea to create Companion. Winning the Michigan Business Challenge through the university's Ross School of Business and Zell Lurie Institute helped get the project underway.

"We worked on it for a few months and released Version 1.0 in November 2014. It was a slow growth student startup, with a few thousand downloads over a few months, and it was exciting for us because it was our first project," Ernst says, adding "When we hit 5,000 users, we had a huge party."

The burst of publicity after the release of the revised version, including articles in *Business Insider* and *Tech Times,* resulted in a hundred times as many downloads, and "we didn't know what hit us. Overnight, it seemed, we had a half-million users."

Interest in Companion has spread from college campuses to include parents who want to use the app to keep track of their young children and to working adults concerned about elderly parents. And while the user base spreads and grows, the team makes plans to expand its collaboration beyond the Ann Arbor Police Department to other campus police/security departments across the

country, getting them to tie into the app so it can contact them directly. They're also working on collecting data on spots where users pull out their phones and activate Companion's "I feel nervous" feature, with plans to analyze reports and map trouble spots that might merit increased public safety attention. The Companion team is also looking into further potential funding sources.

"It's very important to us to keep this free to users," Ernst says. "I have a heavy school schedule and a lot going on and it all makes life crazy, but I know we're doing some really important work here. We live in an information age where so many things are possible. If you feel there's an issue that needs to be addressed, today's technology makes it possible for you to do something… and we are."

To learn more about Companion, send an email to founders@companionapp.io. You can also visit the website at http://www.companionapp.io/

CHAPTER 10

ALERTID PARTNERS WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT TO PROMOTE SAFETY

By Becky Lewis
September 2015

The "ding" of an incoming smartphone notification interrupts her train of thought, and for a moment, she considers not looking right away. Giving in, she glances at the screen and freezes: The alert tells her that for the third time this week, the same gray SUV has been spotted slowly circling through the area near her daughter's school as the day moves toward its close. Other priorities forgotten, she heads out the door to "treat" her little girl to a ride, rather than a walk, home from school.

Created in the aftermath of a lost child incident that fortunately had a happy ending, AlertID started six years ago as a way to provide parents with safety information. With encouragement from local, state and national law enforcement (including the FBI), the free app has expanded its services to also include virtual neighborhood watch; smartphone notification and email alerts on crime reports, fires and severe weather; and a vast library of resources for school administrators and parents on topics that include school safety, alcohol and drug abuse, bullying and cyberbullying, cell phone and Internet safety, and gang violence prevention.

AlertID founder Keli Wilson says it all started in 2009, when she and her husband became separated from their three children at a park for about 45 minutes: "I realized I didn't have the information I needed to give to security to help them find my children. Our original idea was to create a secure website where parents could store photos and other identifying information about their children, but over time it has become so much more."

Drawing on information from local public safety agencies, various national crime databases and sex offender registries, AlertID allows users to sign up for alerts in as many neighborhoods as they wish, letting them track activities near their children's schools, their own workplaces and the homes of other relatives as well as their own residences. And whether they use AlertID on their computers or through a smartphone app, the service includes two-way communication, allowing them to submit information and post "watch out" photos and information for their neighbors.

"We work cooperatively with many law enforcement agencies across the country, often tying directly into their CAD [computer aided dispatch] systems so we can grab information and push it out to our members. It doesn't provide house numbers but our users know the vicinity of incidents," Wilson says. "And with most state sex offender registries, users get all the details. You know if they move, you know if they change jobs. We're also tied directly to the National Weather Service for severe weather alerts, and McGruff and the National Crime Prevention Council [NCPC] provide us with the tips and prevention information our users search in our Live Safely Resource Center."

In addition to partnering with NCPC, AlertID also works with the U.S. Departments of Justice and Homeland Security and other organizations. Since its inception in 2009, AlertID has:

• Delivered more than 350 million public safety alerts.

• Expanded membership to more than 30 countries, including Canada and Mexico.

- Expanded national sex offender data and alerts to cover the homes of more than 270 million people, and expanded local crime data alerts to cover more than 80 million people in the United States and 65 million people in England.

All of these things come together to make a difference in so many people's lives," Wilson says. "There was an incident we heard about where a suspicious vehicle followed a little girl home from school. Her mother reported it to police, but she also posted the information as a community alert, so all members within a one-mile radius knew to be on the lookout for this automobile."

She also cites other success story examples, including one involving an older neighbor who befriended a little boy, another about a real estate agent who offered to let a mother and child stay with him while they searched for a home in a new town: Thanks to AlertID, both were found, in time, to be registered sex offenders.

"This started as a passion that I could do something to make the world a better place, and that motivates me to keep going every day," Wilson says. "We really encourage everyone to sign up for it, to use it to help themselves and prevent tragedies or crimes in their lives."

To learn more about Alert ID or to sign up, visit www.AlertID.com

DANBURY STUDENTS LEARN HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO "SAY SOMETHING"

By Becky Lewis
November 2015

One knew students who self-harm. One knew a girl who wanted to kill herself. Another formerly attended Newtown, Conn., schools. And the fourth knew one of the children who died in the December 2012 shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary.

Each had a personal reason for banding together to make the "Say Something" project at Danbury High School a success. Now, they hope to produce a free

toolkit that school resource officers, school administrators and teachers can use to start their own community awareness efforts.

The four students – Lizzy Newbold, Yago Zoccarato, Natalia Szurawski and Isabel Gustems – took on the Say Something campaign as a class project, but all of them brought a special passion to the classwork because of their past experiences. The project focuses on encouraging students to be aware of signs of suicidal behavior, being bullied and substance abuse, and reaching out to responsible adults such as school resource officers, counselors, teachers and administrators for help. The campaign they spearheaded included activities ranging from a poetry contest to a photo booth, with students encouraged to share their support via social media; from a "Wear Green" Day to the four seniors giving class presentations to freshmen; from bulletin boards carrying signatures of student support to an assembly with Connecticut Gov. Dannel Malloy, Danbury Mayor Mark Boughton, Danbury Superintendent of Schools Sal Pascarella and Mark Barden of sponsoring organization Sandy Hook Promise, who lost a son in Newtown shooting incident.

"We all had individual reasons for wanting to spread the word," says Szurawski. "I had a friend who told me she wanted to commit suicide, and I told someone and got her help. At the time, I didn't know the signs and signals to watch for in someone who is suicidal, and now every student here at Danbury knows those signs and signals thanks to the program.

"After the assembly, she came up on the stage and took my hand and said thank you. It was a very emotional moment for me."

"We rolled this out in conjunction with Sandy Hook Promise, and what we started here in Danbury has really caught fire throughout the state. We're sponsoring a kickoff program, which will include a web component, for representatives from other schools around the state," says Danbury Principal Gary Bocaccio, adding that because Danbury is only seven to eight miles from Newtown, many students have connections there.

Two students with connections are Gustems and Newbold. Gustems, who previously attended Newtown schools, said her friends who live there told her their younger siblings were terrified about returning to school, and "that was extremely disheartening. School is important not just for education, but for the social aspect. I feel this program can make a change in communities so students feel safe and welcome in their schools."

Newbold, who took on Say Something as her Peer Leadership class project before the 2015-2016 school year even started, knew a girl who died in the Newtown shooting, "so when I was approached over the summer about taking this on as project, I felt passionate about it. If we can implement this in all the Danbury schools and then throughout Connecticut, we can build on the hurt in the community and be a positive influence to keep something of the same nature from reoccurring."

The approach to Newbold came via Susan Schullery, who teaches the Peer Leadership class. Sandy Hook Promise, a nonprofit organization, had developed the Say Something approach and offered information via its website (www. sandyhookpromise.org), but hadn't had a lot of success with getting schools to implement the program. An email brought a suggestion to Schullery that some- one from her Peer Leadership class might take on implementing Say Something in Danbury, and she says when she read about it, she decided she could find a student who would "have the passion" for the project. What she didn't expect was to find four.

"Lizzy kicked it off with a Power-Point presentation to all teachers districtwide. Her passion became contagious to the others, who also had their special reasons for becoming connected," Schullery says. "It goes much deeper than just a project with them. I remember Yago commenting that he didn't think it would go beyond the walls of the school, but it's turned into something really big. They hope to put a legacy in place that they can leave behind, and they're creating a toolkit that other schools can use to implement it as part of this legacy."

Zoccarato may have initially thought the program wouldn't reach beyond the walls of Danbury High, but he says that when the team rolled out the planned activities, the other students caught on quickly. "They were proud to take it on and proud to be a part of it," says Zoccarato, who became involved because he had friends who were self-inflicting pain, and he feared that suicide could be the next step. That led to his involvement in the Say Something launch and the development of the toolkit.

"I can't say how proud I am of them for taking the initiative to sustain this," Bocaccio says. "They've rallied our community and all the students feel like they're working toward a common cause. We hope to have a similar effect in other school districts throughout the state. Our superintendent has brought it forward to all the other superintendents in the state and challenged them to make it a priority by participating in the kickoff meeting. This is going viral across Connecticut, and we'd like to see it spread across the country."

"This isn't just a project, this is a movement. We're changing not only our community, but all the surrounding communities as well. There's no stopping this," Szurawski says.

For more information, contact Susan Schullery at schuls@danbury.k12.ct.us.

CHAPTER 12

SUNNYSIDE-
LAW ENFORCEMENT
PARTNERSHIP GENERATES
COMMUNITY SUPPORT

By Becky Lewis
October 2015

Sergeant, there's been an accident in the drop-off zone over at the middle school. No injuries, but the drivers are getting a little testy with each other, and we need an officer to keep things under control.

I'll get someone out there just as soon…wait, school security is calling, they've got someone nearby and they'll handle this one for us.

Direct access to police radios and an arrangement that lets the school system use their special security agents (who are off-duty sworn law enforcement officers) to handle some 911 calls is just one aspect of a strong collaborative relationship between Tucson's Sunnyside Unified School District and local law enforcement, a relationship that earned the partnership a 2015 Exemplary School Safety Initiative Award from the School Safety Advocacy Council.

"The school district averages almost 10 calls to 911 every day, and all of them need to be followed up. We hire off-duty officers to work at the high schools, and if it's something we can deal with right away, we send that officer and let the sergeant know that we have it," says Frank Morales, the district's director of security.

"Giving the schools full access to police radios, rather than only allowing them to use the radios to contact us in an emergency, is very unique," says Sgt. Will Corrales of the Tucson Police Department. "If we need their assistance, they're right there to respond, and it's really great to have that capability."

The strong partnership that allows the easy radio access and resulting support has been more than 20 years in the making. In October 1993, when a Desert View High School student was shot and killed on campus by another student who was on probation, school officials and local law enforcement saw the incident as a call to action. At a time when other school districts seemed reluctant to have a law enforcement presence on their campuses, Sunnyside started its long history of close collaboration with the Tucson Police Department, hiring off-duty police officers to become a part of daily campus life while the city added a police liaison on each campus to coordinate the off-duty police officers. At the same time, Morales became the first juvenile probation officer assigned directly to the district, adding another component to Sunnyside's quest to end school violence on its campuses. He moved over to the school security director position when it was created in 2000.

"We've been doing this for a long time and we've reached the point where law enforcement feels comfortable sharing with us, and our students, families and teachers feel comfortable with what law enforcement is doing," says Public Information Director Mary Veres. "In contrast, many of the school districts around us are struggling to relate with local law enforcement. That's what caught the attention of SSAC and earned us the award."

Morales says that Sunnyside reaches out to law enforcement in a variety of ways, such as inviting officers to dine with students and staff in school cafeterias and welcoming law enforcement recognition and promotion ceremonies to school

facilities. When it comes to hiring off-duty officers to work special duty in the schools, the district looks for ties to the community in its selection process and places great emphasis on officers' customer service skills. Morales checks in with Corrales frequently and spends time riding with him in his patrol car just to help him keep on top of things, which recently led to the two of them working together to help a lost child find her way home.

"Because officers are seen on campuses all the time, no one thinks their presence means something is wrong. They've developed positive community policing relationships and the community knows that law enforcement is here to help," Veres says.

"At some point in almost everyone's life, they will need law enforcement assistance, and we want them to feel comfortable with calling for that help when they need it," Morales says. "We want them to know that law enforcement is here to help in any way they can. We emphasize customer service skills and we've kind of become a model for the rest of Tucson."

Because of that positive relationship-building, when a student who knew Corrales well witnessed his father's attempt to kill his mother, the sergeant was able to work with the boy to help him get through the crisis, and "we still have a positive relationship. These kids are growing up with a positive feeling about law enforcement, and we're seeing it pay off. We don't see the fights we used to see. We don't see the violence we used to see."

The Components of an Award Winner

Sunnyside Unified School District offers a number of resources to back up its award-winning partnership with local law enforcement, including:

- An emergency response plan containing policies and procedures to follow before, during and after an emergency.

- A student handbook.

- A detailed Incident response flowchart.

- Guidelines for schools on contacting law enforcement.

- A series of videos filmed with the assistance of the Desert View High School theater group and local public safety agencies. The videos address lockdowns from student and parent perspectives, and include a Spanish version for parents. They were created as part of an education campaign that addressed responsible cellphone use by students during a lockdown and told parents how to obtain accurate information about unfolding situations.

Sunnyside Unified School District, located in Arizona's Pima County, includes an early learning center, a 2-8 school, 12 elementary schools, three middle schools and three high schools, with a certified teaching staff of approximately 1,200 and a student body of around 17,400.

Veres adds that it isn't just the boots on the ground that work together with the school district, it's something that law enforcement leadership has also decided is important, and they've dedicated staff time to building the relationship: "Leadership on both sides has to be willing to invest time. That's what we tell other school districts, that it has to come from the top."

"It gives us an opportunity to put a face to law enforcement in schools, to build positive relationships with students, staff and the community, and to work on crime prevention," Corrales says. The district and local law enforcement also work together on a series of safety drills and developed an emergency response plan and a discipline matrix together, an exercise that helped each better understand the other's viewpoint and enabled them to work toward speaking the same language. In addition, 911 dispatchers provide training to school district operators on how to deal with angry parents and various crisis situations, which also helps improve communications and increase the common vocabulary.

"We've had some really good discussions, and now we're reaping the positive rewards," Veres says.

Contact Sunnyside School District Public Information Director Mary Veres at MaryVer@susd12.org or Capt. Bob Wilson of the Tucson Police Department at (520) 791-4949.

CHAPTER 13

PASCO COUNTY USES SOCIAL MEDIA AS "GO TO" RESOURCE

By Becky Lewis
September 2015

We're in a lockdown! Somebody said there's a kid shooting up the library! Mom, I'm scared!

Holding back the fear started by that text, she jabs at the shortcut that takes her straight to the district's School Safety Facebook page, and immediately texts back "Bank robbery six blocks from the school. Lockdown is a precaution. No worries!"

With the start of the 2015-2016 school year, Florida's Pasco County Schools and Pasco County Sheriff's Office launched Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts dedicated solely to providing up-to-date information to the community about issues related to school safety. A community education campaign including posters, flyers, in-person promotions by school resource officers at Back-to-School Open Houses and a 20,000-address email blast has encouraged parents to use these sites as their "go to" resource for accurate information about situations including lockdowns, school bus accidents and major maintenance concerns.

"These days with all the student cell phones, as soon as there's even a drill, they start texting their parents, and some of the stories can get pretty out of hand. And of course, the parents' instinct is to come to the school and get their children," says Linda Cobbe, Pasco County Schools Director of Communications & Government Relations. "We want to use the sites and the promotional campaign to educate parents on what the terms lockdown and controlled campus/modified lockdown mean, explain why they shouldn't come to the school, and reassure them that school staff and our SROs train and do drills together and they can trust us to keep their children's safety our top priority."

In the first week of school, Pasco County used the sites to put out information about minor bus accidents, the possibility of closing schools because of Hurricane Ericka and a propane leak at one facility. The school district reposts the information through its own social media channels as well, with the sheriff's office taking the responsibility for maintaining the school safety sites.

"All agencies train for critical incidents, but many agencies fail to train for communications. More and more, it's an expectation from the public that they are going to get information as soon as possible. They rely on social media and it's our responsibility to communicate effectively during a crisis or a potential crisis," says Capt. James Mallo of the Sheriff's Office Juvenile Investigation Division, which includes the SRO program. "The rumors are what hurts us. We need to stop the rumors and tell them what's really going on. We want to reach out to parents and students to set the story straight on even the most minor things."

Mallo notes that for the most part, school bus accidents fall under that heading of "minor things," but all it takes is one text from a child saying "We had an accident" to start a rumor that rapidly spreads and changes. Getting parents to turn to the School Safety Social Media sites when those rumors start to fly results from building a relationship with parents, students and staff to create a climate of communication and trust throughout the 87-school district.

Cobbe says Pasco County Schools enroll approximately 70,000 students in those 87 schools, and it's hard to communicate effectively with the families of that many people. Putting all information related to school safety in one place should help; the response received from staff, students and parents following the August 24 launch has been positive.

"The parents do seem to appreciate it," Cobbe says. "The project shows how really important it is for law enforcement and school districts to communicate with each other, and to work together to provide parents with the most accurate information. I think it could be the first site of this kind in the nation, and I hope it's something that other schools decide to replicate."

To see what the Pasco County sites look like, visit http://pascosheriff.com/ pascosheriffschoolsafety/; follow Twitter: @PSOSchool Safety; see Instagram: @instagram/pascosheriffSchool Safety.

PROJECT SAFETY NET EMPHASIZES TEAM APPROACH

By Becky Lewis
August 2015

The high school's in a lockdown, what does that mean?

I tried texting my kid, but there's too much traffic. What's going on?

The school's been evacuated, where's my daughter?

Whenever there's a school emergency – anything from a broken water main to an active shooter – parents ask questions like these, and too often, no one knows the answers. But in California's Corona-Norco Unified School District, an online educational video and a strong partnership between the school and the community ensure that in this district, those questions don't go unanswered.

"School Safety: Learn How You Can Help," (available at http://news.cnusd.net/school-safety-learn-how-you-can-help/) is just one component among many in Project Safety Net, the district's award-winning school safety program (see side-bar, "Partnership, Best Practices Result in National Award"). Associate Superin-tendent of Instructional Support Michael Cobarrubias says that Corona-Norco, like many other school systems, took a hard look at safety issues following the December 2012 incident at Sandy Hook, and the district came up with an ongoing plan of improvements that range from monthly radio tests to online video and other resources to partnerships with the two local law enforcement agencies.

"We continue to harden the target," Cobarrubias says. "Rather than having to react to an event, we are trying to be proactive. We hope nothing hap-pens, of course, but the more safety nets we have, the more we are able to protect our students and staff."

Several of those "safety nets" can be found online, including "School Safety: Learn How You Can Help." The video explains the difference between a lockdown and an evacuation, tells parents where to go for accurate information in the event of an emer-gency, suggests that parents form telephone/email/text chains to spread information and explains the need to bring identification to a reunification area. In addition to its Internet availability, school administrators have used it at PTA and other parent meetings. A second video, "Active Shooter Preparedness," (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zFC9EhU14wc), addresses non-law enforce-ment reaction to an active shooter event, and a booklet titled Project Safety Net (http://www.cnusd.k12.ca.us//flipbook/safetynet/#p=28) gives an overview of the entire program.

Corona-Norco has made safety a priority, using a combination of budgetary funds, grants and money raised through school bond issues to fund the program for the district's 50 schools, 54,000 students and 5,000 employees. Two years in, suspension rates have fallen five percent and expulsion rates have fallen 16 percent. Student responses to the California Healthy Kids Survey indicate that students say they feel much safer on campus than they did before the program started.

Part of that feeling of improved safety comes from an increased police pres-ence through the addition of SROs in the high schools and the Adopt-A-School program, whereby non-SRO officers frequently visit assigned schools to become a known, and welcome, presence. Lt. Neil Reynolds, who oversees the Special Enforcement Bureau for the Corona Police Department, characterizes his de-partment's partnership with the school district as "a great way to effectively and efficiently put resources in place to keep schools safe. Michael Cobarrubias has

taken a very serious stance and is honestly concerned about school safety. He's a pleasure to work with, and he's really dedicated to making sure schools are safe. We have an open line of communication, and he and I speak frequently about what's going on."

In addition to providing SROs, Corona PD works with the school district on pedestrian safety and other safety information to the schools, and runs a successful Youth Diversion Program that allows students who are detained or arrested for a non-violent misdemeanor offense to work out a contract with their teachers, parents and law enforcement. Successful contract completion results in dismissal of the charges, and Reynolds characterizes the program as "very successful." In 2013 and 2014 combined, approximately 125 students avoided probation and parole, and Reynolds says those cases include several amazing turnaround stories and "most of our contracted minors learn they can dig a little deeper within themselves, during the contract period at least, and, in the end, comment on having a sense of relief and accomplishment, to varying degrees."

Lt. Scott Forbes of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department also uses superlatives when it comes to describing his agency's participation in Project Safety Net: "We have a phenomenal relationship with both Michael Cobarrubias, who we work very closely on a daily basis, and with the district safety coordinator. There's good collaboration all around. The SROs work with the principals at their schools, with their supervisor and with me. I interact with district administration, and the district also works with Corona PD and makes sure that everyone is working together to make this the safest environment possible."

Partnerships, Best Practices Result in National Award

The School Safety Advocacy Council honored Corona-Norco Unified School District and Project Safety Net with its 2015 Exemplary School Safety Initiative Award, recognizing the program for identifying and anticipating safety concerns, then systematically addressing each concern through the application of best practices and the development of innovative partnerships with the Corona Police Department, the Riverside County Sheriff's Department, students, parents and community organizations.

Project Safety Net, implemented in summer 2013, includes the following components:

- Physical renovations and innovations such as adding peepholes, installing AEDs, implementing the use of ID badges and radios, upgrading security cameras and adding fencing as needed to limit access.

- The hiring of non-sworn campus security officers to supplement the school resource officers supplied by the Corona Police Department and the Riverside County Sheriff's Office.

- The Adopt-a-School program, wherein uniformed officers are assigned schools to visit on a regular basis, becoming a familiar presence on campus.

- Interquest Detection Canines, a contract service that provides non-aggressive contraband detection.

- Suicide Prevention Hotline and Program.

- The California Gang Reduction, Intervention and Prevention (Cal-GRIP) Program, which includes training for all middle school students and an evidence-based program that reaches out to at-risk youth. The district was one of 20 in the state selected to receive a grant to participate in this program.

- W.A.T.C.H. Dogs, a program that encourages fathers/grandfathers/uncles to volunteer in schools at least one day a year.

- Annual active shooter simulation training in one of the district's high schools.

- Creation of an active shooter informational video, a "what should parents do in an emergency" video and a safety information pamphlet.

- Walk-to-School program in the city of Eastvale, where the Riverside County Sheriff's Department encourages youth to walk, bike or ride scooters to school, and provides added traffic patrol and control along preferred routes.

The Exemplary School Safety Initiative Award honors districts that have implemented programs that have had a significant impact in school safety and the community.

Part of that safe environment includes safe transportation routes, and Riverside SD provides a traffic team that concentrates on enforcement near schools at the beginning and end of the school days, as well as working the Walk-to-School program in Eastvale. Forbes says that in addition to promoting a healthier life-style, that program reduces the number of vehicles on the road and thus makes the streets even safer. The department also coordinates an annual active shooter drill in one of the district's high schools, using some of its Explorer cadets to assist with role play.

"Trends, such as drug trends or social media trends, are constantly changing. The district and the city and law enforcement all do a good job of communicat-ing so that everybody is on the same page. That makes for a really good team approach," Forbes says.

And in the end, Cobarrubias says, that team approach is what lies at the core of Project Safety Net, and plays a key role in its winning the award and in its overall success.

For more information on Project Safety Net, contact Michael Cobarrubias at mcobarrubias@cnusd.k12.ca.us.

CHAPTER 15

STUDENTS LEAD THE WAY IN FIGHT AGAINST BULLYING

By Becky Lewis

June 2015

Come October, a special dance is being planned for Lakeside Junior-Senior High.

It's not a Homecoming Dance. It's not a Halloween event. It's not a Harvest Festival.

It's a Bullying Prevention Dance as part of National Bullying Prevention Month observances, and it's just one piece of a student-driven anti-bullying campaign that has helped lead to a 30-percent reduction in bullying and harassment at the Plummer, Idaho school.

"With an issue that is so personal like bullying, it has to be solved by the people that it affects the most, and that's the students. We can talk around it all day as adults, but it's when you see students get involved that you see positive change," says Judi Sharrett, superintendent of the 400-student Plummer-Worley School District, which consists of Lakeside Elementary in addition to the junior-senior high. "Ever since I was a principal, I have thought that students learning the conflict resolution skills they need to deal with this themselves was important."

Plummer-Worley had anti-bullying policies and procedures in place a year before a state mandate went into effect, implementing that procedural change when Sharrett became superintendent in 2009. The student-driven efforts started in September 2014 when some 40 students from various grade levels at both the Lakeside public schools and the Coeur D'Alene Tribal School in nearby DeSmet attended a student leadership forum on bullying and harassment. Coordinated by Oregon Health Equity Alliance, a non-profit coalition that addresses health inequality through education, advocacy and policy change, that first forum led to students' meeting with an Equity Alliance representative several other times during the school year. The group came up with a formal plan and presentation that they gave before the school board and the community, which included the upcoming dance, already-successful tip boxes located in all four school buildings, anti-bullying posters and generally watching out for each other.

"Since the student involvement has been initiated, I think the students are policing themselves a lot more, and we're getting fewer complaints for the counselors to look into," Sharrett says. Reported bullying and harassment incidents fell from 20 in 2013-2014 to 14 during 2014-2015, a 30-percent reduction. Although the numbers may sound low, she is quick to say that small school districts face the same bullying issues as do larger ones, including cyberbullying, which "sneaks up on our students just like it does everywhere else. It can be very covert for a long time and is probably the most hurtful thing that kids are going through right now. We try to make it non-threatening to report and we look into the issues, and it is hard to separate issues at school from issues on Facebook."

Plummer-Worley has used a grant to have consultants and behavioral support organizations work on creating a more positive school climate for students and staff, and also has had community forums and discussions to promote involvement, both before and during the student-driven initiative. The Coeur D'Alene Tribe Social Services Department has been a strong partner in that community effort from the beginning, and Bernie LaSarte of the tribe's Stop Violence Against Indian Women Program has also seen a significant reduction in bullying reports.

"I would get calls from parents whose kids were being bullied in school, and I would go to the school to advocate for the students. That's how I came to realize they were having issues at the school too," LaSarte says. She and other representatives from the tribe worked closely with Plummer-Worley administration in the development of the school's anti-bullying policy and its subsequent adoption by tribal services.

"My program has been going into the schools and teaching awareness for years, but having the whole community become involved was another thing altogether," she adds.

"We've expanded the limited resources of a small school district by building partnerships. Equity Alliance works with the students on surfacing their issues and relating to them honestly, and we've worked very proactively with the Coeur D'Alene tribe to solve problems together. Many tribal members perceive this as a serious issue," says Sharrett. Plummer, a town of slightly more than 1,000 residents that includes the public school district, is located on the reservation, and the 16 departments of the tribal government, including the 14-member Coeur D'Alene Tribal Police Department, are also located in Plummer. (The town itself also has a two-person police department as part of the city government.)

LaSarte says that many of those 16 departments have become involved in that effort, and for several years during the initial phases of the project, the Stop Violence Against Indian Women project sponsored poster and essay contests and conducted regular anti-bullying education efforts in the schools prior to the task force's moving into the student-led phase of the effort.

"It's really exciting to see the kids interested in solving the issues themselves. The key is student engagement, and also community engagement. In a small community, there is a lot of power in consistency among community agencies," Sharrett says.

The student-driven initiative started during the 2014-2015 year with a focus on students in grades 6 through 12, who received classroom lessons on how to deal with a bully, whether they are being bullied themselves or they see bullying between other people. Those lessons have included strategies such as walking away, increasing your self-confidence and not permitting the bully to get the upper hand, and most importantly, reporting the situation to a trusted adult. Next year, those students will begin mentoring the younger ones, passing those lessons on.

"A lot of things are coming together to help create a better environment so that kids aren't being bullied, or if they are bullied, they know what to do. And what better way to make those changes than having the older students share their skills with the younger ones?" Sharrett says.

LaSarte adds that the effort has been quite an undertaking for the small community, but the working relationship has been strong and she has seen positive change since Sharrett became superintendent: "I used to get a lot of calls from parents, and some of it was really wicked and violent stuff. In this past school year, I got only one call, which I hope means we're on the right track. You hear about the increase in violence in schools, and it has to stem from someplace. If it stems from bullying, which is my belief, then let's try to get it stopped before it gets to the violence level."

For more information on how Plummer-Worley school district and the Lakeside schools have used student involvement to expand the resources of small school district in combatting bullying, contact Superintendent Judi Sharrett at Sharrett. Judi@lakesidesch.org.

CAMPUS, COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS STRENGTHEN EMERGENCY RESPONSE

By Becky Lewis
June 2015

They say little things mean a lot. Little things like a cup of coffee and a sandwich at 3 in the morning after a traumatic event. A snack brought to you by someone who was snug in bed an hour before, yet responded to a need with "I'll be right there."

David Perry, chief of the 67-officer campus police department at Florida State University and 2014-2015 president of the International Association of Campus
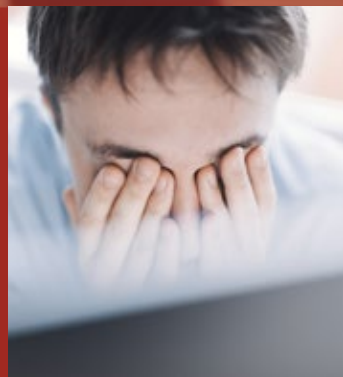
Law Enforcement Administrators (IACLEA), knows about the little things that strong community partnerships can do after a tragedy from firsthand experience. On Nov. 19, 2014, former FSU student Myron May shot and wounded three students studying at the Strozier Library before being killed by police, and Perry, an advocate of building partnerships that strengthen the resources available to law enforcement in a crisis situation, recalls what happened when he called food services vendor Aramark.

"It may sound like a small thing, but to be able to call at 1 in the morning and say 'we just had a tragic incident and can you provide drinks and snacks for the students still at the library' and get an immediate response, that was huge. You can't put a dollar amount on it or even adequately describe what it means to have snacks at the library and in our offices at 3 in the morning, and know that someone made that effort for you," Perry says. "It really underlines what can happen when you keep the lines of communication open throughout the campus and the community. The outpouring of support in general was so immediate it caught us off-guard. It really doesn't hit you how much the community does support you until tragedy strikes."

Since becoming FSU chief in 2005, Perry has worked on developing those strong campus and community partnerships, and his keynote address at the Mid America Regional IACLEA Conference in Chicago in April 2015 focused on the valuable role these partnerships played in the aftermath of the 2014 shooting.

"We created these partnerships through informal, impromptu meetings, by saying 'Hey let's get coffee, let's get lunch.' We make sure that the lines of communication are open all the time instead of just calling when we need something. Then, because you have this partnership in place, you have a resource when you need it," he says.

Other resources called on after the FSU incident include the facilities and grounds crew, which performed cleanup, and the counseling center, which alerted Perry to a need to ensure privacy from the media for students seeking services. Because FSU had this strong web of partnerships in place, the university was able to proceed with recovery quickly and with a minimum of red tape, Perry says.

"It all starts over coffee and a doughnut. Coffee and a doughnut garner a lot of support down the road, and it's good to know who your supporters are and where your assistance will come from long before tragedy strikes your campus and your community," says Perry, who counts on relationships with community partners such as the Tallahassee police, the Leon County sheriff's office, fire and rescue, and local offices of federal agencies to include the FBI and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives in addition to internal partners.

Those internal partnerships include one with the library director that Perry credits for saving lives in November 2014: "The library director and I agreed to increase security in the library following a tragic sexual assault six years ago. We incorporated a swipe card system like you might see in a subway at a significant cost, and because we made that change, the shooter couldn't get into the main body of the library, which is a very open space. Had he been able to get in there, the outcome could have been even more tragic."

Yet another internal partnership between the campus police, IT and emergency management resulted in the creation of FSU's version of the well-known Staples' "Easy Button," a yellow box where a single button pulls together 15 emergency warning systems (text messages, emails, sirens, etc.) under one access command. These systems can be triggered in the event of tornadoes, severe thunderstorms, flash floods, severe lightning, a HazMat situation or a law enforcement-designated emergency situation.

Perry calls the FSU active threat training program and the way his officers responded another piece of the success story, noting that his officers responded exactly as they had been trained. FSU provides its own in-house active threat training, and a number of other institutions of higher education, including the University of Chicago, Florida A&M University and Savannah State University, have asked FSU to train their officers.

"I think it's also important to note that it's not until a crisis occurs that you get to evaluate leadership. Our president, Ken Fuchs, had only been here 10 days at the time of the incident, and to be pressed into the national and international spotlight and respond the way he did is great," Perry says. "You can't ever put too high a price on leadership."

For more information about bringing FSU's active threat training to another campus, or to arrange for Perry to speak about the importance of community and campus partnerships in dealing with an active threat situation, contact him at dlperry@fsu.edu.

MISSOURI INTEGRATES EMERGENCY OPERATIONS INTO "1PLAN"

By Becky Lewis
April 2016

Missouri is well known as the "Show Me" State, but when it comes to helping schools create emergency operations plans (EOPs), it's Missouri that has something to show to other states: Missouri 1Plan, an online tool that integrates incident planning, mapping and training.

Missouri 1Plan (demo at http://www.moces.org/ MO_1Plan_Overview/OPEN_ME_IN_BROWSER.html; one-pager at http://www.moces.org/files/mo1plan/ one_page_MO.pdf) offers online assistance with assessments, training, site mapping and emergency plans, plus a status board and a mobile app. The state

worked with a vendor and used U.S. Department of Homeland Security funding to produce the tool, which is offered free to all schools and districts in the state. Since its introduction in January 2015, Missouri 1Plan has grown from 170 initial users to more than 1,500.

John Warner, emergency planning coordinator at the Missouri Center for Education Safety (MOCES), says when he participated in the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) Comprehensive School Safety Initiative Topical Working Group on State School Safety Issues in February 2016, he realized that a number of other states wanted a similar system, and Missouri is willing to share its experience establishing the system with other states interested in developing their own tools.

"Every K-12 school in Missouri has access to the secure portal," says Warner, a school resource officer for more than 20 years with the Columbia Police Department. "It allows districts that have struggled with how to write an EOP to not only produce one, but to also keep it updated. If your plan is on paper, when you make a change, you have to send a copy of the change around to everyone. With the portal, it automatically sends out an announcement that a change has been made, and administrators get notices that let them know who has read it."

"You can give law enforcement, fire, EMS and 911 access to look at the plan and see how it relates to their own plans, allowing for community involvement. And Missouri 1Plan lets schools put in their emergency contacts, which teachers and administrators can then pull up using the mobile app," he adds.

Warner says that even without Missouri 1Plan, larger school districts may already have a strong EOP in place because they've been able to afford to hire consultants, but small districts tend to struggle: "We heard this over and over again at the NIJ meeting. Small districts don't have the manpower and all of the work falls on one person, be it the superintendent, the principal or maybe the football coach. Giving our small districts access to Missouri 1Plan allows them to put a team together and they can learn as they go. I don't want to say it's the be-all and end-all, but it seems to work, and it works pretty well."

MOCES provides a "customer service" aspect as well, contacting technical support as needed to help schools resolve any issues they may encounter. Warner, however, says the Center has received very little negative feedback, with many districts saying how much better Missouri 1Plan is than what they were using before: "I know some of them had not touched their paper EOPs for five or six years, and this is pretty much like getting off a horse and getting on a rocket ship."

In addition to positive feedback on the tool in general, schools specifically say that teachers continually ask for an emergency app, because they always have

their devices with them whether they're on the playground, in the cafeteria or on a field trip. Another plus with schools is the robustness and versatility of Missouri 1Plan, which includes elements as varied as radicalization and assessing the school climate to ensuring the school has access to enough shelter in place space in the event of a tornado, from determining whether a school needs more cameras to planning for active threat and other drills.

MOCES staff spreads the word about all those features in various ways, with the most successful being regional workshops that provide lots of face time; Warner says after each of six scheduled workshops, there's been an increase in Missouri 1Plan use in that local area.

In addition to being willing to share information about Missouri 1Plan with the rest of the country, MOCES also offers an open access, Cloud-based Resource Toolkit on its website (http://www.moces.org/files/toolkit/School%20Safety%20Resource%20Toolkit%20v-8.23.2.pdf) that includes national resources for law enforcement, administrators, teachers, parents and students in areas such as bullying, public safety, sports injuries, school bus safety, active shooter situations, bomb threats and more: "We wanted school districts to have resource information at their fingertips so they don't have to sort through search results. We wanted it to be a one-stop shop, and we tell our districts that if they think something is missing, let us know and we'll research it and put it up there."

For more information on Missouri 1Plan, contact John Warner at 573-445-9920 x311, email warner@moces.org.

NYSSA CONNECTS SCHOOLS WITH AFFORDABLE EMERGENCY RESPONSE SYSTEM

By Becky Lewis
July 2015

The record-breaking cold that set in over the weekend sent the town's residents shivering indoors. And it also started a crack in an aging, uninsulated pipe near the high school's cafeteria. A crack that suddenly opened wide Monday morning, drenching lunch ingredients with water in a powerful blast that sent one worker running to call 911 and another to the computer in the manager's office. A web-based computer connected to the school's emergency response system, which quickly told the worker where to find the shut-off valve and stop the waterfall pouring into the kitchen.

Starting with a pilot project in one school in 2014, the New York State Sheriffs' Association (NYSSA) has partnered with the state's Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) to make an emergency response system available to K-12 public schools in the state. NYSSA, the driving force behind the development of the project, provides coordination assistance for schools during the documentation phase and acts as a statewide liaison for the first responders, and the BOCES made the emergency response system an aidable program, which means qualifying schools can obtain financial assistance with the operating costs.

NYSSA Deputy Executive Director Charles Gallo says when a school signs on, it receives a list of required information, which includes evacuation plans, building schematics, staffing, emergency response plans and more. NYSSA assists with coordinating input into the system, and makes site visits to take photographs and to hold planning meetings with local emergency responders: "We might take a photo of the interior of only one classroom if they look similar, but we take pictures out the windows to establish the line of sight. Every school is different and the information the schools store can be different. We talk about specific needs and how to develop information that will be needed when we hold the pre-plan tactical meeting, which includes not just the local sheriff's office and school officials, but also local police, fire, EMS and state police."

When the documentation process ends, NYSSA provides further assistance with training and tabletop exercises to make sure everyone understands how to use the system, as well as the ins and outs of emergency staging. Schools can also use the system in various non-emergency situations, such as planning for a big football game or coordinating fire and other disaster drills.

"It's essentially an electronic storage cabinet for everything that schools previously kept in a three-ring binder. It includes information on the internal structure, such as the location of stored chemicals, lockboxes, fire suppression, and more, all of it digitized, stored in the Cloud and available in a automatically updated web-based format that can be accessed by all stakeholders," Gallo says, adding that school administrators decide who has rights to make changes, such as inputting more photographs and adding or deleting personnel. The system also includes a smartphone app that can provide two-way communication and photograph transmission during an emergency, and a stored static version that can be accessed if Internet connectivity fails during a crisis.

Deciding on the use of this all-hazards interactive crisis management system, which is SAFETY Act certified by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, came about as the end result of a two-year NYSSA search for a school safety project that could help meet the emergency planning needs of the state's 7,000-plus public schools.

"Right now there are 140 schools involved in the project, across five BOCES. We are moving regionally, and our plan is to ensure that eventually every school district in the state, including those in New York City, has a coordinated emergency response plan in place," Gallo says.

And in the process of ensuring those emergency response plans are in place, NYSSA is learning that many schools are inadequately prepared, as it takes them a long time to even locate the needed information: "If these schools were to have an event, they wouldn't know where the information is themselves, let alone be able to get it to law enforcement. Once they're part of the emergency response system, the information available will be consistent and first responders will learn that accessibility to relevant information for all schools is just a click or two away."

For more information on the project, visit http://www.preparedresponse.com/ New-York-Sheriffs-Rapid-Responder-Program.html or contact Deputy Executive Director Charles Gallo at cgallo@nysheriffs.org

VIRGINIA EVALUATES THREAT ASSESSMENT PROCESSES

By Becky Lewis
June 2015

Virginia is unique in many ways: the Virginia General Assembly is the oldest continuous law-making body in the "New World," independent cities and counties operate in the same way and it is the most populous state in the country without a major professional sports team.

It's also the only state in the country that mandates that every school have a threat assessment team, and in the 2013-2014 school year, the first after the authorizing

legislation passed, threat assessment teams received reports of 3,283 student threats, of which two thirds were classified as low risk, and 96 percent were subsequently resolved without any acts of violence.

A report funded by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), Threat Assessment in Virginia Schools: Technical Report of the *Threat Assessment Survey for 2013-2014,* provides detailed information on the threat assessment teams' impact. Data behind the research came from a school safety survey conducted annually via its website by the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety (VCSCS), part of the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), with analysis conducted by a team led by Dr. Dewey Cornell from the Youth Violence Project of the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia.

Donna Michaelis, Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety manager, explains that Virginia has required threat assessment teams at institutions of higher education since 2008 (in the wake of the 2007 Virginia Tech shooting), and the state added the requirements for all public K-12 schools following the Sandy Hook incident in 2012.

"Many schools in the state created threat assessment teams after Columbine, but they all had their own approach. This legislation mandated development of model policies and procedures, guidance documents and training materials, all of which can be found on our website," Michaelis says. "And after the implementation, schools started calling us and saying 'We have this case and we don't know what to do about it,' so we implemented an agreement with a threat management consultant who works with them."

Schools can apply to the Center for some of the consultant's time, and Michaelis says currently available assistance also includes train-the-trainer courses and materials. In the near future, the Center plans to release a customizable app that can serve as both an educational resource on the threat assessment process and a reporting tool.

"We want to make sure schools and the community know how to recognize when someone needs help, who needs to know about it, and how the team should intervene and provide services. We're trying to educate the community as well as school personnel about what threat assessment teams in schools do. In almost every incident (of serious targeted violence) that has occurred in U.S. schools, there was leakage, that is, somebody knew something about the person's behavior or plans," Michaelis says. "If someone is on a pathway to violence, concerned school personnel want to intervene and stop the progression."

Threat assessment teams should include members with expertise in counseling, instruction, school administration and law enforcement, and may serve more than one school. Also, team members can work at different locations, provided they are available when needed to evaluate a potential threat. Through guidance provided by the Department of Education, the need for alternatives to zero tolerance policies is emphasized, and further, threat assessment facilitates active case management based on an individualized assessment of the case rather than a proscriptive "one-size-fits-all" approach. During the 2013-2014 school year, the vast majority of students identified as engaging in threatening behavior received disciplinary consequences and support services that permitted them to return to school.

Michaelis notes that schools need to ensure that students, faculty, staff and parents know about their school's threat assessment program. The Center's annual school climate survey (http://www.dcjs.virginia.gov/vcscs/documents/StateTechnicalReport2014highschoolsurvey8-14-14.pdf) found that the majority of responding teachers did not know whether their school had formal threat assessment guidelines, let alone what those guidelines stated. Schools must assess expressed or communicated threats, and the model policies and procedures (http://www.dcjs.virginia.gov/vcscs/documents/ThreatAssessmentPoliciesProceduresGuidelines-Final.pdf) offered by the Center also encourage identifying and assessing a broad range of social, emotional and academic behaviors of concern and addressing those as well. These policies and procedures are consistent with the process set forth in *Threat Assessment in Schools:*

Research Highlights

Threat Assessment in Virginia Schools: Technical Report of the Threat Assessment Survey for 2013-2014, (pdf, 51 pages) can be downloaded from http://www.dcjs.virginia.gov/vcscs/documents/TechnicalReport2014ThreatAssessmentSurvey5-12-15.pdf

Some highlights follow:

- Of Virginia's 2,000 schools, 810 reported at least one case involving threatening statements or behavior. Those 810 schools reported a total of 3,283 cases, generating a prevalence rate of approximately four cases per school and 6.1 cases per 1,000 students. This equates to only 1.6 threats per school if all 2,000 schools are considered.

- Threats were identified by faculty (51%), students (34%), administrators (11%), other school staff members (9%), parents (7%) and others (4%). (Percentages exceed 100 because some threats were reported by more than one source).

- High schools had lower prevalence rates (4.3 per 1,000) than elementary (6.6) and middle (6.7) schools. The highest frequencies of threats were in grades 3-9.

- Most threats were made by boys (81%).

- There was a presence of prior discipline referrals in 60.7 percent of cases.

- School responses included notifying the student's parents (88%), cautioning the student about the consequences of carrying out the threat (65%) and increasing monitoring of the student (53%). In approximately half (51%) of cases, the threat was resolved with the student giving an explanation or apology (having engaged in no known attempts to act on the threat that was communicated).

- Various kinds of safety precautions were undertaken when the threat was deemed to be serious. These included consultation with the school resource officer or other school safety specialist (42%), notifying the intended target's parents (35%), protecting and notifying intended targets (29%), developing a behavior intervention or safety plan (25%) and providing direct supervision of the students until removed from campus by law enforcement or a parent (21%).

A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates, a 2002 publication of the U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. Department of Education; they also reflect other procedures used in some Virginia schools divisions, including the "Virginia Student Threat Assessment Guidelines" developed by the Youth Violence Project. (Note that schools may use the model policies and procedures, but may use other procedures as well.)

Research Highlights (continued)

- A guiding principle of threat assessment is that the most effective way to prevent violence is to address the problem or conflict that underlies the threat. Accordingly, students were referred for school-based counseling (33%), mental health assessment (20%), review of an existing Individualized Education Program (18%) or 504 Plan (2%), special education evaluation (4%) or hospitalization (4%). Disciplinary procedures were followed in 80 percent of cases; 80 percent also returned to school.

- In almost all cases (96%) there was no known attempt to carry out the threat. Although a positive finding, this does not clearly demonstrate that the threat assessment process prevented the threat because there was no control group (e.g. of threats made in schools without a threat assessment process) to allow comparison.

- There were 30 threats (2%) judged by schools to have been averted when a student attempted to carry them out. These cases primarily involved attempted battery, but there were two cases in which the student had possession of a firearm and 11 attempts to stab in which a student had possession of a knife or cutting weapon. There were 29 threats (2%) judged by the schools to have been carried out by the student. These cases primarily involved battery, with two stabbings.

For more information about Virginia's use of threat assessment teams, including links to model policies and procedures, training materials, reports, enacting legislation and other related information, visit the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety website at www.dcjs.virginia.gov.

CHAPTER 20

CONFERENCE PROVIDES LESSONS ON STOPPING BULLYING AT YOUNG AGE

By Becky Lewis
April 2016

When is a playground push just childish behavior?

When is repeated hitting and biting of the same child bullying?

How do you know the difference?

Amy Smith, principal of Memorial Education Center (MEC) and preschool coordinator for Kentucky's Pulaski County Schools, faces questions like those every day.

With her recent attendance at the School Safety Advocacy Council's National Bullying and Child Victimization Conference in February 2016, she learned she's not alone in realizing that bullying can start at an extremely young age, and the sooner that there's an intervention, the greater the chance that bullying won't become a lifelong behavior.

"I see children as young as age 2 targeting a certain child, pushing him down, taking toys away, biting and hitting. The child is a specific target and becomes a victim. I hear three-year-olds using bad language and yelling," Smith says. "People say 'well, they're just kids,' but when they keep doing it continuously, that's bullying and that's a victim."

MEC staff, including the school's psychologist, meet monthly to talk about school climate and how to recognize victims through behaviors such as acting withdrawn, sad or aggressive, because sometimes the bullying may take place on the bus or at home, with the behavior surfacing at school.

"As educators, we have the advantage of observing children's interactions with their peers as well as observing their behavior around adults. Behavioral changes are typically noticed sooner in an academic setting and can be attributed to anger or even an attempt to be socially accepted, resulting in demonstrating behaviors of aggression, outbursts and even defiance," she says. "In certain situations, students may resort to bullying to avoid becoming bullied themselves. If someone picks on them, they start picking on somebody else and demonstrating the same kind of behavior. That way, the attention is no longer on them as the victim."

When staff members at MEC identify a problem, they work with children to provide guidance and support, helping to protect victims and reduce bullying. Since returning from the conference, Smith says she's worked to refine programs and increase support: "Several sessions I attended at the conference discussed how and why we should help children keep from becoming bullies or being victimized. The main message learned was listen and take interest in the child as an individual."

Smith came away particularly impressed by keynote speaker Dr. Sameer Hinduja, director of the Cyber-Bullying Research Center at Florida Atlantic University, and with Chief Joseph Solomon and Sgt. Joseph Aiello of the Methuen (Mass.) Police Department, who gave a presentation on Police Response to Students with Spectrum Disorders: "The police officers talked about how to communicate with students with disabilities and autism, about how to use pictures. They focused on communicating, being patient and respecting each other's space.

I have an enrollment of approximately 260 students and 30 to 40 percent have IEPs [individualized education programs), so our program is definitely an at-risk program."

The National Conference on Bullying and Child Victimization also referenced school programs that use the Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) and Response to Intervention (RTI) models, both in use at MEC. Smith explains that the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004) allows school districts to use scientific, research-based interventions as a way of identifying students with specific learning disabilities, generally through following the RTI process. RTI uses a three-tiered approach to identifying and assisting at-risk students, and PCIS incorporates a parallel three-tiered system of service delivery in which each tier represents an increasingly intense level of services. In practical terms, that means implementing approaches like the school's "Be Safe Be Kind Be Helpful" campaign that includes posters, daily announcements and colorful bees appearing on t-shirts, the website, the Facebook page and pretty much everywhere throughout the school.

"We have rules for the classroom, for the hallway, for the cafeteria, for the bus. During the first two weeks of school, we always teach expectations, routine and expected behaviors. However, that does not mean that we do not see behaviors that need to be corrected," Smith says. "Yet just this morning, we had a kid punch another kid in the stomach. We're talking about 4-year-olds. So it's back to PBIS and reteaching expected behaviors and talking about how to replace

that behavior, so we can nip this kind of activity in the bud. The information I gained from attending the National Bullying and Child Victimization Conference has provided me with new ways to help children who are bullied or victimized, and to help those who do the bullying. I've learned new strategies for building self-confidence and creating positive reinforcement."

The School Safety Advocacy Council provides trainings, performs safety assessments and hosts two major conferences every year, the National Conference on School Safety in the summer and the National Conference on Bullying and Child Victimization every February. To learn more, read "School Safety Advocacy Council Helps Schools Find Their Strengths," (https://school-safetyinfo.org/advocacycouncil_update.html) elsewhere on SchoolSafetyInfo.org. For more information on early intervention against bullying at the Memorial Education Center, contact Amy Smith at amy.smith@pulaski.kyschools.us.

CHAPTER 21

SCHOOL EMERGENCY APP AN "EYE OPENER" FOR EMERGENCY DISPATCH

By Becky Lewis
August 2015

Every minute, every second, of every day, emergency dispatchers make decisions based on training and instinct. Unable to see what's happening on the other end of the line, they must rely on audio cues to assign the right codes, to accurately direct emergency personnel in their response.

A new technology developed by a partnership headed by the City of Ammon, Idaho, could be the first ripple that becomes the wave changing all that.

The School Emergency Screencast Application ties together a school's existing camera system, the city's fiber optic network, ultra high-speed bandwidth and gunshot sensor technology to provide a live feed to emergency dispatch in the event of an active shooter incident. Winner of first prize in the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) Ultra-High Speed (UHS) Application Challenge, the app garnered a $75,000 award that the city, Bonneville County and Bonneville Joint School District 93 will share, with a short-term goal of installing a fully functional system throughout test site Sand Creek Middle School and a long-term plan that just might see changes expand throughout the county's 22 schools and beyond.

Greg Warner, Bonneville County Emergency Communications Center Director, said the county's dispatch team found the concept fascinating, because for the first time they could see what was happening: "It's a dramatic shift in their normal dispatching duties. They like the idea that they can see and express what they're seeing in real time to law enforcement, fire and paramedics. Historically, law enforcement would respond to an active shooter situation blind, and now they could have a site assessment before they get on scene. We would certainly promote it here because we want to give first responders everything they need for the best possible outcome."

Some of that prize money may go toward getting the dispatchers what they need for a successful outcome as well, as City of Ammon Technology Director Bruce Patterson says he expects the county and school district to use their portions of the funds to purchase equipment needed for full implementation and to develop standard operating procedures. The city, which loaned some equipment to the county and school district during the development phase, will use its funds as needed to support the other two entities in their efforts.

While Ammon provided help to the county and school district to help them become part of the project, the city also received assistance in becoming involved in the Challenge in the first place. Ammon belongs to U.S. Ignite (more at https://www.us-ignite.org/), an organization that promotes the use of high bandwidth resources to develop transformative and innovative advanced technology, and the organization brought the Challenge to Ammon's attention because of the city's existing fiber optic network.

Patterson says Ammon considered various options before deciding on the plan for the Challenge-winning app: "I knew the school district had these IP cameras and there were concerns about sharing the feed with the sheriff's department and dispatch 24/7. We came up with the idea of creating an automated system that would send an alert if triggered by a gunshot report. The idea advanced from providing dispatch with a still photo of the shooter to ultimately giving them access to all of the school's cameras, which is actually easier to implement."

The city established a goal of using existing technology as much as possible, adding the automation of gunshot sensors to the existing high-speed network and camera system.

"The idea of a network capable of instantly building a connection and providing bandwidth based on an automated trigger could, in addition, serve any number of future applications. For example, a trigger based on facial recognition of a crowd of people fleeing down a hallway would be easy to implement using the foundation laid in this project," Patterson says; such an application could prove life-saving in the event of an active threat using a knife or other silent weapon. "By making what we created extensible, it can serve many other purposes in the future."

The Ammon team explained the concept well enough in its Phase I proposal that the city advanced to Phase II of the Challenge, which entailed actually developing and building the app. An immediate challenge arose with the gunshot sensor portion of the project: while sensors work well outdoors where sound travels in one direction, indoor sensing is another matter, particularly in a school filled with slamming locker doors and other loud, sharp background noises. The partnering sensor vendor persisted, using ongoing recording throughout the school year to continually refine and improve the product's false-positive ratio to the point that Patterson says that most of the time, it's accurate within three feet. The vendor achieved those results through several rounds of testing the sensors against shots fired inside the school from multiple handguns and rifles of differing calibers, he says, using the data collected to refine the sensors' algorithm to filter out everything but gunfire.

"We felt pretty confident going in that we could do it because the technological barriers were low, and the biggest barrier turned out to be people and policies. Nobody thought it was a bad idea, but there were concerns, although those faded when they saw the accuracy of the demo. Now the county and school district just need to develop policies that meet their comfort levels," Patterson says. "And once there is investment on the part of the people using the system, they will think of how to improve or expand on it."

While the policy and procedure development will primarily come from Warner and the Emergency Communications Center team, the school district and the Bonneville County Sheriff's Office also have roles in the future of the project, as they have throughout the initial development stages. In addition, Capt. Samuel Hulse of the sheriff's office, the primary liaison with the city, thinks the system could have future applications outside the school system.

"If you look at what's happened nationally over the past 20 years, when an active shooter event happens, the information is always spotty. Law enforcement knows there is a problem, but it's hard to give an accurate picture to responding units. I recognize this would be a valuable technology for schools, but it could also be deployed in other areas that draw large crowds, like football stadiums or movie theaters," Hulse says. "It's a good technology and it will be interesting to see what the next generation of sensors looks like, because the technology is close but it's not ready to deploy on a mass scale. It's good that the app has a person inserted into it early, because human eyes look at it from the dispatch center and can make a judgment about what they see."

John Pymm, director of Safety Operations and Facilities for the school district, shares Hulse's enthusiasm for the project: "In my role as the director of safety, I of course pay very close attention to active shooter situations throughout the country, and the one thing that has become crystal clear is that response time means everything as far as saving lives. When Bruce approached the school district to be part of a project that could dramatically reduce response time, we were definitely in."

During the development phase, the project installed 11 sensors in Sand Creek Middle School, but approximately one-third of the school still lacks coverage, and the district plans to use some of the Challenge money to finish placing sensors throughout the facility. Pymm says there has been talk of setting Sand Creek up as a full pilot site that would be open to visitors from outside the area, but those plans have not been discussed in depth.

"My hope is we can finish the school and move forward from there. As a school district, we very much appreciate the cooperation we've had with the City of Ammon and the Bonneville County Sheriff's Office, and we're very proud to be a part of moving this technology forward," Pymm says.

For more information about The School Emergency Screencast Application, contact Bruce Patterson at bpatterson@ci.ammon.id.us, phone (208) 612-4054. For more information on National Institute of Justice Challenges and other funding opportunities, visit http://nij.gov/funding/Pages/current.aspx

CHAPTER 22

YOUTH CRIME WATCH TURNS STUDENTS INTO PEER EDUCATORS

By Becky Lewis
May 2016

Come up with a catchy acronym and matching shirts and jackets, and soon you have a club that everyone wants to join.

That was the strategy adopted by now-Lt. Raul Correa of the Miami-Dade Schools Police Department, back in the day 26 years ago when he served as school resource officer at Citrus Grove Middle School. He dubbed his school's Youth Crime Watch club COP (Citrus on Patrol), the young members took ownership of the club's efforts and soon everyone wanted to join.

The Youth Crime Watch program, part of the Citizens' Crime Watch of Miami-Dade, is still going strong after more than 30 years in existence, serving nearly 30,000 students every school year with youth crime prevention presentations, safety projects, rallies, assemblies, special events and Youth Crime Watch club meetings. Youth crime Watch school coordinators conduct more than 500 presentations per school year at various Miami-Dade County schools, and approximately 20 of those schools sponsor successful club programs like the one Correa helped mentor at Citrus Grove.

"The members are not junior cops. They educate their peers about youth crime prevention through positive peer pressure and peer-to-peer education," says Joel Mesa, education director and school coordinator for Citizens' Crime Watch. Participation in the club program takes place at the individual school level, with the Youth Crime Watch program providing training and ongoing support. "We provide materials and resources, but the youth serve as the educators."

Mesa says schools receive a lot of leeway in implementing the program and in selecting the topics on which they focus. (For two examples of the program's flexibility, see sidebars "Crime Educators Help Others, and Themselves, Make Better Choices" and "Involving Even the Youngest in Educating Their Peers".) Potential topics for presentations and club focus area include (but are not limited to) bullying prevention, social media concerns such as cyberbullying and sexting, stranger danger, violence prevention and gun safety awareness. Youth Crime Watch often partners with the Miami-Dade Schools Police Department and other local law enforcement agencies in developing and giving presentations.

"We use Youth Crime Watch as, so to speak, a 'jack of all trades,' " says Public Information Officer Correa. "Our officers are actively involved in gun safety presentations, in character presentations, in anything and everything we can do when it comes to youth safety. We work hand-in-hand with Joel, we help him out and he helps us out. Wherever there is a Youth Crime Watch Club, we are actively involved."

Correa says that Youth Crime Watch was initially forged out of a partnership between the school system and local law enforcement, including the Miami-Dade Police Department as well as the 200-officer school police department. Mesa recalls that the umbrella Citizens' Crime Watch program started with citizens concerned about a particular incident of violence more than 40 years ago, and that when that program became successful, the program launched the first Youth Crime Watch Club at North Miami Beach Junior High in 1979. The school board and the police departments came up with funding to continue its success and expand the program (although in recent years that funding has faced competition from other priorities).

Mesa says school crime statistics and survey assessments have continuously demonstrated that schools with YCW programs have lower crime rates and safer school environments, which in turn contribute to academic success. And in addition to academic success in school, the program also can generate life success, according to Correa: "We instill safety lessons and they remember them when they're adults. Because of that, this is a program that the whole community should support."

Although the program has strong support in the community and in the school system, Mesa says Youth Crime Watch does face two obstacles to implementing clubs: One is finding a teacher or administrator willing to act as a club adviser, the other is facing the misperception that having a club means there is crime in the school. However, although not all schools want to have clubs, many more do want presentations from Youth Crime Watch and from law enforcement. These schools often also participate in activities such as Blue Ribbon Week to celebrate a violence-free lifestyle, Stop the Violence walks and marches, the Youth Crime Watch poster and essay contest, and many others.

Youth Crime Watch of Miami-Dade is a past recipient of the National Crime Prevention Program of the Year from the National Crime Prevention Council. For more information contact Joel Mesa at (305) 468-1302, email Joel@citizenscrimewatch.org, or to learn more about law enforcement involvement, contact Lt. Raul Correa at rcorrea@dadeschools.net.

Dr. Michael M. Krop High School: Crime Educators Help Others, and Themselves, Make Better Choices

"Preventing Crime In and Out of School Through Education and Volunteering."

That's the slogan which the students at Miami's Dr. Michael M. Krop Senior High School originally came up with to describe their Crime Educators program, and it's still the slogan for that school's Youth Crime Watch chapter 15 years later.

Kim Ferreira, co-chair of the school's Special Education Department, says that from the beginning, Krop students wanted to emphasize the educational component of the program by referring to their group as Crime Educators, and Youth Crime Watch (YCW) of Miami-Dade supported the school's efforts in that direction from the onset. As part of its emphasis on education, the Krop program sponsors numerous guest speakers throughout the year who present in a variety of venues ranging from multiple presentations to individual classrooms to assemblies in the auditorium for some 700 students.

"Some of our presentations are purely educational, but many of our speakers are just sharing their experiences. Students are so tired of being told over and over again by adults 'don't do drugs,' 'wear your seat belt,' and so on, but when you have a former gang member who is now a pastor or even a Special Agent from Homeland Security who makes his presentation on human

trafficking real by telling stories about high school and middle school kids they can relate to, it makes a difference," Ferreira says.

Because Youth Crime Watch gives Ferreira and her students the freedom to choose the topics they want to address and how to address them, the school has been able to bring in speakers such as a woman who told about being valedictorian of her class and deciding on a military career, and "a week before she was supposed to leave, she went out drinking with her friends, and she got so trashed she doesn't remember getting into her car. She doesn't remember around 4 or 5 in the morning hitting someone who was selling newspapers and pinning that person's body under her car. She does remember the time she spent in prison for vehicular manslaughter. That's very different than someone just standing up and saying 'Drinking and driving kills.' "

Youth Crime Watch also supports the Krop Crime Educators in taking field trips to their feeder middle and elementary schools, where the high school students present to the younger children. Ferreira says both groups benefit from the shared activities and "it's eye-opening for the older kids. They can't believe the questions they get and what the younger children know and have been exposed to."

Dr. Michael M. Krop High School (cont.)

One of the students involved in these presentations as president of the Crime Educators group has gone on to graduate from college and become director of an aftercare program; he likes to occasionally return to Krop and act as an adult chaperone on field trips. Ferreira explains this young man was an elementary school bully – not just someone who called other children names but someone who got physical and forced younger children to give him money. It turns out, she says, that he in turn was being bullied by a physically abusive older brother, and he turned his life around in high school and won numerous awards for his part in Youth Crime Watch and the Crime Educators.

"When he went with us as a chaperone to his former elementary school, the teachers there were shocked because every single one of them told me he was the worst kid they had ever seen in all their years of teaching, and to me he's just a gentle giant," she says. "A lot of times as teachers, you think you have a bully and you have a victim, and you have to help the victim, but if you find out where the bully is coming from, it may be that he needs help too."

In addition to sponsoring speakers and going into the field to give presentations, the Youth Crime Watch Crime Educators participate in the national Red Ribbon Week against alcohol and drug abuse with posters and simple lunchtime activities like musical chairs as a way of showing students they can have fun without drugs and alcohol. The program has also benefitted from extremely strong support from the Krop High administration.

"The program has helped the students make better choices themselves, and it's helped them recognize other students that need help. There have been students that I didn't realize were involved with drugs and alcohol, either through their own activities or the activities of a family member," Ferreira says. "I think being involved has helped many of these students not only in the short-term, but it has also helped them to take on leadership roles in their adult lives."

To learn more about the Crime Educators program at Dr. Michael M. Krop High School, contact Kim Ferreira at kferreira@dadeschools.net

Ojus Elementary: Involving Even the Youngest in Educating Their Peers

"Everyone" said it was impossible to involve kindergartners in a Youth Crime Watch chapter.

"Not age appropriate," they said.

At Ojus Elementary in Miami, for the past four years, the kindergartners have proved "everyone" wrong.

Margie Love, faculty adviser to the Ojus Youth Crime Watch Program, includes one representative from each class, at every grade level, in the monthly club meetings. Each child then returns to his/her classroom the following day and explains the concepts addressed in the meeting and shares the information learned.

"All of the children, kindergarten included, can speak on any safety topic and they're all very involved," Love says. "The entire school is kept apprised on all the issues and on how to keep themselves safe both in their school and in their community."

Love says because many of the children remain in the club for multiple years, she tries to come up with new presentations and ideas so the experience remains fresh: "Since I have experience with running an adult Neighborhood Watch Program, my idea is to groom them so they grow up to be adults who are inspired to be leaders."

The types of presentations and activities that Love uses to keep things fresh include field trips to local police departments in Aventura, Hallandale, North Miami Beach and Miami-Dade, and to a nearby U.S. Coast Guard station; in-school presentations from those agencies that include (but are not limited to) "Eddie Eagle on gun safety;" honoring local law enforcement officers during First Responder Appreciation Week in January; presentations from the local FBI Field Office; on-site fingerprinting for local children and visits from therapy dogs and a local ham radio club.

Nearly 1,000 children participated in a Stop the Violence walk around school grounds during the program's first year and members of the Youth Crime Watch participate in the annual North Miami Beach holiday parade to promote awareness of the program. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children sent representatives from Texas to do a presentation held in memory of Adam Walsh, and another major event took place in April 2015, when Florida Gov. Rick Scott, at Love's invitation, came to the school as part of a presentation of a Medal of Honor to North Miami Beach Officer Lino Diaz, who had been shot and

Ojus Elementary (cont.)

injured in the line of duty. The event included command staff from the Aventura, North Miami Beach and Miami-Dade police departments, and representatives of local government. (Other local police departments have also assisted the program, including Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Golden Beach, Sunny Isles Beach, Miami Gardens, North Miami, Bay Harbor Islands, Bal Harbour and Ft. Lauderdale.)

"Almost everything we do is in memory of the Sandy Hook first-graders killed in that massacre. We really studied what they did there that worked and have implemented strategies such as training our kindergartners to move right into the bathroom when we have a drill," Love says. "We will never forget those children, and I hope that programs like this one catch on nationally so that we will never have another tragedy like that one."

Seeing something like Youth Crime Watch move to the national level is a hope and a dream for Love, who says she often tells her principal that "we can prepare these children so they'll get the highest test scores, achieve the highest GPAs and go to the best colleges, and what good is any of that if they're not safe? I think school systems across America should incorporate safety programs like ours into the curriculum and make it mandatory. Our world has changed and we have to change with it. We would be remiss if we didn't prepare these children from the earliest age possible so that when they leave their homes they feel safe, confident and prepared."

"If you ask me what is the most important thing I've done in my life, this is it. I want this to be my legacy," she adds.

For more information on the all-grades-involvement in Youth Crime Watch at Ojus Elementary, contact Margie Love at mmlove@ dadeschools.net