



# YORKVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH NEWSLETTER

March 2011

## G.R.E.A.T.

The Gang Resistance Education and Training program (G.R.E.A.T.) is new to the Yorkville Police Department and the Yorkville Schools. Since the beginning of the school year Officer Behr Pfizenmaier has been teaching the program to 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders. The program doesn't just emphasize gang resistance. Pfizenmaier states, "It is so much more. G.R.E.A.T. covers a lot of topics that need to be discussed at these grade levels. In the classroom we talk about things such as anger management, peer pressure, decision making, violence and gangs."

Upon completion of G.R.E.A.T., the 5<sup>th</sup> grade students who participate in the program have a graduation ceremony. At that time the students are recognized and receive a small gift from the Yorkville Police Department. Pfizenmaier states, "I have received a lot of positive feedback from this program. When I finish teaching the curriculum to the students, they are disappointed that G.R.E.A.T. isn't the entire school year. Participation is never an issue; the students are eager to participate."

Once students complete G.R.E.A.T. the objective is that they will resist gangs and violence and display GREAT citizenship. At the end of this school year approximately 850 students will have gone through the G.R.E.A.T.

curriculum. If you have any questions regarding the program you can contact Officer Pfizenmaier at 630-553-8599 ext. 5213 or check out [www.great-online.org](http://www.great-online.org) online.

## Cyberbullying

A juvenile issue that the Yorkville Police Department frequently deals with is cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is when someone is harassed, embarrassed, threatened or tormented while using an electronic device. This is most commonly done while on the Internet, especially through blogs, social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace and instant messaging. It also includes other types of electronic communications, such as e-mail and text messaging.

Unlike traditional bullying which is usually limited to the school yard or neighborhood, cyberbullying can occur anywhere and anytime; whenever your child is able to receive electronic communications. In some ways, this makes cyberbullying worse, but in other ways easier to deal with than traditional bullying. In some situations, steps such as avoiding problem websites and blocking communications from certain people are very effective.

Cyberbullying has been in the news frequently and is a very serious problem. The college student whose dorm was secretly

being videotaped and streamed online. The teen who had been receiving countless emails taunting her, including one telling her to hang herself. Another teen who was being harassed by the mother of a former friend who was using an assumed name on a social networking site. All of these examples ended with the teen taking his or her life. Research has shown a correlation between bullying (both victims and offenders) and increased risk for teen depression and suicide (Hinduja, S. & Patchin, J. W., 2010).

What can parents do? If your child uses the Internet to communicate with others, monitor what they are doing. Explain to them about appropriate online behavior and what to do if they are cyberbullied. Being involved and monitoring what your child does online is the biggest preventative measure.

Look for signs in your child's behavior and see if they could be the victim of bullying, or could be the bully themselves. Signs that a child could be the victim of cyberbullying include being uneasy about going to school, depression, avoiding discussion about what he/she does on the computer, and withdrawing themselves from friends and family.

Please take time to talk to your child about this issue and monitor what they are doing online.

## School Resource Officers

Many residents may be unfamiliar with our School Resource Officer program. The Yorkville Police Department started working directly in the schools in the early 1990s with the introduction of the D.A.R.E. program and has continued since.

While some people may think that the police presence in our schools was a result of increased crime, the main goal of school resource officers is to bridge the gap between juveniles and the police. The most important part of the School Resource Officer program is the relationships that are developed between the police department and community. This includes the relationship between the schools and the police department, relationships between students and the police and also parents and the police. The program has helped open up lines of communications and increased our effectiveness at solving problems in our schools and community.

It has been evident that students are more willing to come to the police to report crimes, such as thefts and bullying, when they have an officer who is familiar to go to. However, most police contacts in the school are more positive in nature. Students are willing to talk with officers about non-criminal, everyday activities. This helps officers become familiar with the students they serve and the concerns that students have today.

The officers are assigned to the schools for the whole school year. When school is in session, their days are spent in the schools, interacting with students, faculty and staff. During school breaks, the officers perform various patrol and community duties.

The Yorkville Police Department has seen several officers serve as School Resource Officers through the years. Today,

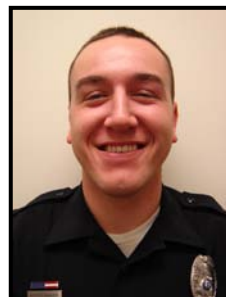
the Yorkville Police Department has two School Resource Officers who started in their new roles earlier this school year. Officer Ray Mikolasek is 6-year veteran of the Police Department and focuses his attention at the Yorkville High School and Yorkville High School Freshman Academy. Officer Behr Pfizenmaier is a 3-year veteran of the Police Department and focuses his attention on the Middle School and Elementary Schools in Yorkville. Both Officer Mikolasek and Officer Pfizenmaier can tell you that their jobs are very different from each other at the Schools.

At the high school level Officer Mikolasek deals with issues such as truancy, theft, battery, weapon



offenses, tobacco violations and drugs. Officer Mikolasek is not just an enforcer at the school; he gets involved in preventative measures as well. Officer Mikolasek will assist with traffic control, speak as a guest for classes that relate to law and self-defense, provide security for school events and speak to/mentor students throughout the day. Some training that Officer Mikolasek received included attending a week-long school resource officer class, special training in gang identification and enforcement and also a class on threat assessment in schools. The Yorkville Police Department would like to welcome Officer Mikolasek to his new position.

Officer Pfizenmaier explains that he deals with similar crimes to those Officer Mikolasek is faced with, but



less frequently. Officer Pfizenmaier spends the majority of the school year inside the classrooms teaching Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.). Officer Pfizenmaier has also done guest visits to the elementary schools for assemblies and Character Counts activities. Like Officer Mikolasek, Officer Pfizenmaier has attended different types of training for his new position. Officer Pfizenmaier received training as a G.R.E.A.T. instructor for middle school and elementary school, attended a week-long school resource officer class, had special training in gang identification and enforcement and also attended a class on threat assessment in schools. Most of Officer Pfizenmaier's day is interacting with students and faculty and emphasizing decision making to the students along with mentoring the students. The Yorkville Police Department would like to welcome Officer Pfizenmaier to his new position.

The popularity of School Resource Officers has spread across the country as the benefits of the program to the police departments, schools and community have become more known. Yorkville is proud to have such a strong and long-standing program.

If you have any questions for our School Resource Officers, you can e-mail Officer Mikolasek at [rmikolasek@yorkville.il.us](mailto:rmikolasek@yorkville.il.us) or Officer Pfizenmaier at [bpfizenmaier@yorkville.il.us](mailto:bpfizenmaier@yorkville.il.us).

## Happy Retirement

The Yorkville Police Department would like to extend its congratulations to Sergeant Barry Groesch on his recent retirement. Sergeant Groesch served with the Yorkville Police Department for 27 years. We wish him well in his future endeavors.