



SHERRI BEVAN WALSH

Summit County Prosecutor

Newsletter

June 2008

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Message from the Prosecutor



Prosecutor
Sherri Bevan Walsh

Last month, several hundred Akron middle schoolers graduated from the G.R.E.A.T. (Gang Resistance Education And Training) program. Two assistant prosecutors, Heaven DiMartino and Bob Capes from my Office's Juvenile Division, and Deputy Mike Beers from the Summit County Sheriff's Office, taught classes at Goodyear, Innes, Jennings, and Reidinger Middle Schools. They did an outstanding job and had an overwhelmingly positive impact on the lives of their students.

I am very proud of the past year's accomplishments with this program and the exceptional work of our G.R.E.A.T. Officers.

This is our first year running a G.R.E.A.T. program having received a federal grant for \$149,929 in August of last year. My Office works in conjunction with the Summit County Sheriff's Office to implement this program in the Akron Public Schools. I am very proud of the past year's accomplishments with this program and the exceptional work of our G.R.E.A.T. Officers.

Upon entering our program, we found that many of our students were already familiar with the gangs in their neighborhoods. At the end of the middle school program, our instructors had students complete surveys. Several of the answers to the question, "What is a gang?" indicate that our children have indeed come into contact with gangs. Some answered, "Hill-Top," others, "V-Nots," "Crips," or "Goonies." More important, children are aware of the risks of gang life. Words such as violent, drugs, criminals, and stealing were often mentioned on the surveys.

G.R.E.A.T. is a school-based, law enforcement instructed classroom curriculum. With prevention as its primary objective, the program is intended as an immunization against delinquency, youth violence, and gang membership. G.R.E.A.T. lessons focus on providing life skills to students to help them avoid using delinquent behavior and violence to solve problems.

We taught the gang resistance program to 4th and 6th graders throughout the 2007-2008 school year in Akron schools. The Families Component is currently being offered in collaboration with our faith-based partners, Harvest House Christian Center and Mt. Olive. We also recently kicked off our G.R.E.A.T. Summers program where G.R.E.A.T. grads can enjoy summer fun safely and gang-free.

DID YOU KNOW?

A youth gang is commonly thought of as a self-formed association of peers having the following characteristics:

- three or more members, generally ages 12 to 24
- a name and some sense of identity, generally indicated by such symbols as style of clothing, graffiti, and hand signs; some degree of permanence and organization
- an elevated level of involvement in delinquent or criminal activity.

The Akron Police Department has a unit specifically dedicated to fighting gangs and my Office has two prosecutors who are also committed to this unit, Assistant Prosecutors John Green and Kevin Mayer. Officers have identified several dozen youth gangs in the city, including the Crips, Hill-Tops, Kaika Klan Outlaws, K-Town Gang, V-Nots, West Side, and Goonies.

Gun violence is a prominent feature of youth gangs, as is juvenile violence as a whole. Studies show that an overwhelming proportion of juvenile violence is committed by adolescents who are involved in gangs.

Kicking off G.R.E.A.T. Summers with the Akron Aeros



The G.R.E.A.T. Summer program kicked off on June 23. Deputy Mike Beers and Assistant Prosecutors Heaven DiMartino and Felicia Easter, accompanied 20 students to the first G.R.E.A.T. Summer outing, an Akron Aeros game. The students had a G.R.E.A.T. time and, as luck would have it, the Aeros won!

Students will also be attending a rodeo on June 28 and going bowling on July 1. Throughout the rest of the summer, there will be trips to the Cleveland Zoo, the Akron Art Museum, and the Cuyahoga Valley Environmental Education Center. Students will also attend a Cleveland Indians game, go swimming at the YMCA, and take a train ride along the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad.

Questions? E-mail Laurie Cramer:
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We're on the Web!
www.co.summit.oh.us/prosecutor

Top Cop

Deputy Mike Beers
Summit County Sheriff's Office &
G.R.E.A.T. Officer



Nominated by: Assistant Prosecutors Bob Capes and Heaven DiMartino

According to Assistant Prosecutor Bob Capes, "Deputy Mike Beers has taken the G.R.E.A.T. program and made it better by his personal dedication to the kids. G.R.E.A.T. is a well-developed syllabus, but Deputy Beers has ensured that G.R.E.A.T. is not just another D.A.R.E. program on a gang subject. His students get a face-full of Dep. Beers that they cannot ignore. He gets his students interested in G.R.E.A.T. by getting them interested in him, whether as a Sheriff's deputy, a rodeo bull rider, or an excellent example of a mentor and role model.

Dep. Beers is committed to the students, generous with his time, and innovative in his approach to keeping their interest. He learns names and family backgrounds. Deputy Mike Beers is going to wear down and change a lot of otherwise tough inner-city potential gang members.

His efforts to mentor potential V-NOTs and Bloodlines, by giving them tools, goals, and inspiration to resist gang recruitment reflects great credit on himself, as well as the Sheriff's office and the Prosecutor's Office. His singular efforts with the G.R.E.A.T. program have the potential to prevent future violent crimes by gangs, and are worthy of his selection as Top Cop."

Assistant Prosecutor Heaven DiMartino's says one word comes to mind when she thinks about Dep. Beers and the G.R.E.A.T. program: **dedicated**, saying,

"Deputy Beers demonstrates his dedication to the G.R.E.A.T. program everyday. His commitment to G.R.E.A.T. has truly inspired his students. He has worked diligently to help students change their perception of law enforcement and to resist joining gangs.

Deputy Beers' students genuinely enjoy his classes. His students have consistently written letters thanking him for his participation in the program and one of his schools had "Mike Beers Day" at the end of the school year.

Deputy Beers is the epitome of a G.R.E.A.T. Officer—he is a role model, mentor, and friend to his students."

Way to go, **Top Cop!** Thank you for helping make G.R.E.A.T. such a success!

MEET ASSISTANT PROSECUTORS BOB CAPES and HEAVEN DIMARTINO G.R.E.A.T. OFFICERS, JUVENILE DIVISION

Bob Capes

Position: Assistant Prosecutor

Hire date: November 2002

Hometown: Cuyahoga Falls

Law degree: University of Akron

Little known fact: Flying jets is easier than you think: pull stick back, houses get small, push stick forward, houses get big.

Why I teach G.R.E.A.T.: As a retired military officer and being somewhat to the right of Attila the Hun, teaching a social experiment program like G.R.E.A.T. gives me the chance to give the information that students should be getting from parents. If it sticks, fantastic. If not, then they have no excuse when they appear at Dan Street. The lessons are basic content of character, morals, respect others, communication, and how and why to resist recruitment by gangs. If we can reach some, it may have an impact down the road.



Prosecutor Walsh presented Assistant Prosecutor Bob Capes with the High Point Award earlier this month.

Heaven DiMartino

Position: Assistant Prosecutor

Hire date: January 2003

Hometown: Long Island, New York

Law degree: University of Akron

Little known fact: My first name actually is Heaven.

Why I teach G.R.E.A.T.: As a G.R.E.A.T. Officer, I have had the opportunity to provide elementary and middle school students with information that will assist them in becoming better decision-makers. The G.R.E.A.T. program empowers students to believe in themselves and helps students to recognize that their decisions affect them today, tomorrow, and in the future. In addition to providing students with the opportunity to develop skills such as good communication and decision making, the G.R.E.A.T. lessons help to debunk the hype propagated by gangs thereby allowing students to resist joining gangs and to instead focus on reaching their goals.



GUILTY!

Congratulations to Assistant Prosecutors **Charlene Hardy, Shauna Hill, Susan Manofsky (2), Greg Peacock, Angela Poth-Wypasek, Omar Siddiq, and Maggie Tomaro**, who each had juries return **GUILTY VERDICTS** at trials in May!

GREAT JOB, ASSISTANT PROSECUTORS!