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MCS D teaches anti-violence and drug resistance at GNPAL youth camp.

Norristown, Pa., (August 20, 2013) – The Montgomery County Sheriff's Department participated in a summer youth basketball camp at the Greater Norristown Police Athletic League (GNPAL) Center in Norristown, Pa., to help teach kids anti-violence and drug resistance programs.

It is the first year that the MCS D has been involved in the camp, which ended for the summer on Friday, August 16th. Sheriff Eileen Whalon Behr chose to participate in Norristown Police Chief Willie G. Richet's youth basketball camp at the GNPAL Center because it supports her mission to be proactive with youth crime prevention programs.

"Being involved in their daily camp activities and as coaches allows the kids to see law enforcement in a different light," said Sgt. Patricia Haas, who teaches the DA.R.E. and G.R.E.A.T. youth drug and violence prevention programs for the MCS D.

The co-ed youth camp provided two weeks of basketball drills and life skills training to approximately 120 boys and girls in the county. It has also featured guest speakers such as college and professional athletes, and local law enforcement since it started 11 years ago.

Maurice Allen, Camp Director and Faith Crabbe, Facilities Manager and Norristown Recreation Committee's Martin Luther King, Jr., "Living the Dream" award recipient oversee the camp which is a part of several summer youth programs held at the center.

Devonte Hampton, a 17 year-old high school senior from Norristown, Pa., and counselor at the camp had spent some time in the county's youth center for cutting off his house arrest bracelet. He said he was impacted by advice from a law enforcement officer during his stay.

"An officer who knew my father told me that this was not the way to go to becoming a man."

Hampton was inspired by the advice to join the U.S. Marine Corps after he graduates.

Milton Carter, an 11 year-old student from Norristown, Pa., said, "I see this camp as an opportunity and a reward."

Otherwise, he said he would just be hanging around most of the time.

Carter said he enjoyed the reinforcement of lessons about drug safety and anti-violence and was proud about winning an award at the camp for leadership and teamwork, after leading his basketball team to three victories.

Role models in urban areas may be scarce and Dep. Adam Wilson of the MCSD said he felt that law enforcement presence can make a difference when working with urban youth programs. One of the teens had been disrespectful to Wilson but his peer warned the camper, "Hey, chill - he's a cop."

Not all lessons learned from the MCSD were about drugs and violence.

"The officers have taught me communication skills, and about consequences and about being a leader. Dep. Wilson also showed us that he would never quit on us," said La'Dirah Ferguson a 13 year-old, who was proud to tough it out after suffering a sprained wrist and black eye from playing basketball.

"I wish camp could be longer," she added.



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