



P. C. teens and police learn to get along

By Claire K. Racine, Reporter
Friday, December 5, 2014 10:00 AM

Fifteen teenagers sit in a cramped room on a weekday evening. One by one they stand up and take turns sharing intimate details about their lives: the inner workings of their families, problems with friends, what they've done well and how they've screwed up, what their goals are.



During a program aimed at bridging the gulf between teenagers and the police, Port Chester High School seniors Rita Luzuriaga, Mariahna Adrover, Katherine Salazar and Carlos Membreno swap stories with 26-year-old Nicole Zurawin, the operations and worker center coordinator at Neighbors Link in Mount Kisco.

CLAIRE K. RACINE|WESTMORE NEWS

1 2

The group gathered on Monday, Nov. 24 at Family Services of Westchester offices on South Main Street as part of an initiative to bring together at-risk youth with local police officers.

One boy explained that he decided to stop talking to his sister because she gets angry easily which, in turn, makes his father mad. While this has hurt the relationship with his sibling, he said it made him feel good to be on better terms with his dad.

Another boy told the group he opted to break with his circle of friends. "I knew they were doing a lot of damage to me, so I choose new friends now," he said.

A girl admitted she had skipped class and she felt bad about that decision. Similarly, another student felt guilty about leaving his homework to the last minute which resulted in poor grades.

While their peers were speaking, some of the teenagers looked at their friends and fidgeted. For the most part, however, they sat quietly, letting each student speak without interruption.

As they had been coached to do, the boys and girls shared decisions they had made, how it made them feel and who it affected. Each one ended with a personal goal. Most championed the idea of graduating from high school, some hoping to go straight to work while others dreamed of attending college.

A safe space for frank discussions

Creating a safe space where the teens could have the difficult and honest discussions is essential for the Youth Police Initiative (YPI) organized by the North American Family Institute to succeed, said David Peters, a master trainer with NAFI.

After spending five evenings together, boys and girls really felt comfortable sharing genuine emotion, but the teenagers were not the only ones to share their life stories. Port Chester police officers also talked about the choices they made in life that led them to their current positions.

Like many of the students, Lt. Robert Salerno said he grew up in a single-parent household although he still had a close relationship with his father. He was forced to make new friends when he moved to live with his dad and started school at Port Chester High School. The new friends he made were more ambitious than his previous ones and set his life on a good path. "I don't know where it would have gone if I'd stayed in Yonkers," Salerno told the teenagers.

Melissa Rosario, better known to many of the students by her maiden name as Officer Acocella, spoke about the difficulties she faced pursuing her dream to become a police officer.

Even Chief Richard Conway told the students his interest in sports in high school was to the detriment of his grades. He did not let that stop him, however, starting at Westchester Community College before transferring to the more prestigious Manhattan College.

Search GO

Subscriber Log In

[Log Out](#) | [Edit Account](#) | [Change Password](#)

Westmore NEWS Weekly Round-up Sign up for news delivered right to your inbox

More than just a uniform

Allowing teenagers to connect with the police on a personal level and develop deeper relationships with adults in general is the second goal of YPI.

"They become more responsible and respectful of adults," Peters said. "It helps them grow."

Humanizing police into individuals for at-risk youths can reduce juvenile crime and teach them how to deescalate tense situations, the master trainer explained. Without opportunities for teenagers to meet with police officers like they did in this program, the only time they are likely to see them is in high-stress situations. "[Police] are usually dealing with people in their worst moment," Peters said, which is why it is crucial for teens to see the real people underneath the uniforms.

The children are not the only ones who are supposed to learn something from the initiative.

"It's a train the trainer kind of thing," Conway said. "It's like a practical for cops becoming facilitators."

The hands-on training will help the officers assist future community interactions and better connect with young people. Other adults from community groups in the area also attended for the same reason like Nicole Zurawin from Neighbors Link in Mount Kisco who plans to run similar workshops for her organization based on what she learned in Port Chester.

Port Chester held its first YPI program in 2009 but had to halt the initiative in 2012 due to a lack of funding. This year, the Port Chester Police Department had some funds from Westchester County they needed to spend and officers agreed to donate their time so as not to impact the department's overtime budget.

Each student who participated earned a stipend of \$80 after graduating from the program on Tuesday, Nov. 25.

Submit A Comment

Please fill out the form below to submit a comment.

* indicates a required field

Comment *

Your Name

Email

Phone



I'm not a robot

reCAPTCHA
Privacy - Terms

A comment must be approved by our staff before it will displayed on the website.

SUBMIT

Westmore News

Like Page 1.8K likes

Westmore News

on Tuesday

The #BlindBrook Board of Education meets at 7:30 p.m. to adopt the 2021-22 year budget.

Like
Comment
Share

Westmore News

on Monday

"So far, everyone has been really nice. The neighbors have all been so gracious, so nice. Just being able to relax. There's a stark difference between living in the city. So difficult with social distancing. We were just stuck in the house. Just now I can take a walk with my children—anytime."

HERE'S MY BUSINESS CARD

TO PLACE YOUR BUSINESS DIRECTORY AD CALL (914) 939-6864

<p>TONY'S AUTOMOTIVE REPAIR SHOP</p> <p style="font-size: 0.7em;">Auto Repairs • Oil Changes • Brakes • Tires • Wheel Alignment • Car Wash • Detailing • Car Wash • Waxing • Car Wash • Waxing</p> <p style="font-size: 0.7em;">38 Cottage Street, Port Chester Port Chester, NY 10573</p> <p style="font-size: 0.7em;">939-6404 • 939-5454</p>	<p>DOUBLE A CONTRACTORS</p> <p style="font-size: 0.7em;">Roofing • Siding • Windows • Gutters • Drywall • Painting • Electrical • Plumbing • HVAC • Insulation • Foundation • Scaffolding • Staircases • Decks • Patios • Porches • Additions • Remodeling • Landscaping • Tree Removal • Demolition • Site Work • Foundation • Scaffolding • Staircases • Decks • Patios • Porches • Additions • Remodeling • Landscaping • Tree Removal • Demolition • Site Work</p> <p style="font-size: 0.7em;">1000 Westchester Ave., Port Chester, NY 10573</p> <p style="font-size: 0.7em;">914-939-0711 • 914-939-0711</p>	<p>PLUMBING AND HEATING CONTRACTORS</p> <p style="font-size: 0.7em;">100% SEASON OCCUPANT</p> <p style="font-size: 0.7em;">JOSEPH L. SUPPA & SONS, INC.</p> <p style="font-size: 0.7em;">100 Westchester Ave., Port Chester, NY 10573</p> <p style="font-size: 0.7em;">914-939-0259 • 263-91-6847</p>
<p>Reach Thousands of Households Every Week</p> <p>For only \$15 per week</p> <p>AMERICAN 15-16-15-15</p> <p>CALL 914-939-6864</p>	<p>BioHeat</p> <p style="font-size: 0.7em;">is the heat of the future and we have it now!</p> <p style="font-size: 0.7em;">Westmore</p> <p style="font-size: 0.7em;">www.bioheat.com</p>	<p>RICHARD ABEL REALTY</p> <p style="font-size: 0.7em;">Lisette Marie Scott-Abel</p> <p style="font-size: 0.7em;">38 Boulevard, Port Chester, NY 10573</p> <p style="font-size: 0.7em;">Tel: 914-939-6864</p>

FINANCIAL WELLNESS DOESN'T HAPPEN BY ACCIDENT.

IT HAPPENS BY APPOINTMENT.

CALL US TO SCHEDULE YOURS TODAY.

Pell Wealth Partners
Member of the Wealth Management Group

Pell Wealth Partners specializes in:

- Comprehensive Approach to Financial Planning
- Sustainable Responsible Investing
- Estate Planning Strategies
- Retirement Income Strategies
- Women's Financial Strategies
- Divorce Financial Planning

INDEPENDENT ADVISORS 3000

Geri Eisenman Pell, CFP®, MBA, CDFIA®

Private Wealth Advisor
Chief Executive Officer
of Pell Wealth Partners, a private wealth advisory practice of Ameriprise Financial Services, LLC

800 Westchester Avenue, Suite 300
Rye Brook, NY 10573
914.253.8800

pellwealthpartners.com

The Churchill
300 East 40th Street, Suite 2BR
New York, NY 10016

Pell Wealth Partners is a private wealth advisory practice of Ameriprise Financial Services, LLC. Certified Financial Planner. Trust of Standard Inc. owns the certificate marks CFP®, CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ and CFP® each always design in the U.S. Investment products are not insured or FDIC insured and are subject to the risk of loss. Investment products are not guaranteed by any financial institution, and neither Ameriprise nor any other provider has any control or influence over the value. Ameriprise does not control or influence the performance of any of the advisors' investment decisions, which is then submitted to and judged by investors. Key factors and criteria include: investment performance, investment products for the firm, regulatory and compliance records, and quality of professional expertise. Ameriprise is a registered provider of Life, Accident, & Health insurance. This advertisement is not intended to be a solicitation for insurance. Ameriprise Financial, Inc. does not offer any legal advice. Consult with a tax advisor or attorney. The Company is a member of Ameriprise Financial, Inc. Investment advisory services and products are made available through Ameriprise Financial Services, LLC, a registered investment advisor. Ameriprise Financial Services, LLC, Member FINRA and SIPC. © 2020 Ameriprise Financial, Inc. All rights reserved.

https://westmorenews.com/Content/Community-News/Community-News/Article/P-C-span-style-font-weight-bold-teens-and-police-span-learn-to-get-al... 2/3