

Peacekeeper Cadet Program breaks down barriers



Since 2014, it's been a program that's making students stand at attention.

The Peacekeeper Cadet Program at Princess Alexandra Community School in Saskatoon, formed thanks to a partnership between the Dream Broker program and the Saskatoon Police Service (SPS), has been effective in helping develop strong connections with students in Grades 4 through 8 and the SPS.

The program's overall goals are focused in three areas: building trust, physical fitness, and citizenship and culture. Some of the broader values embraced by the program include fostering leadership, discipline, individual goal setting, education, participation in organized sports and community involvement.

"Sometimes, you'll see attendance lagging in certain programs. Attendance in this program is steady through the entire year," said Audrey Armstrong, Dream Broker at Princess Alexandra.

The cadet program runs from October through May, with preference being given to students from Princess Alexandra or other schools with a Dream Broker program. The inaugural cadets were the ones who developed the expectations and goals that the group as a whole continually strives towards: "listen and be respectful; work hard in everything we do; help each other, family and community; be a good influence to those around me; and be a positive role model."

Armstrong explained that a typical cadet meeting includes physical activity such as a drill or sports, learning opportunities through guest and community speakers, and hands-on activities and connection and teachings with Indigenous Elders.

According to Armstrong, one of the most positive aspects of the program is the new perspective that participants gain of the police.

"When the officers are going through applications, they kind of want to target higher risk kids that haven't had great involvement with the police. It's all about breaking down barriers for kids," said Armstrong. "Now, they're seeing the police in a whole different light. The police are their friends and they're showing them positive activities and keeping them busy."

Organizers of the cadet program have been able to leverage some outside opportunities for its members.

In the past two years, the cadets were chosen to take part in the Horizon 100 Cycling Club Youth Program, where they learned about proper biking and care, technical mastery (bike-handling skills), cycling safety, how to express speed through increased effort and building distance and endurance.

Participants have a chance to compete in the 40 kilometre Gran Fond race, and if they finish they can keep their bike. In 2015, cadets joined the racing program Racing for Respect, an initiative believed to be the first inner-city racing team. The SPS racing team was in action all last summer, helping to keep the kids connected.

Armstrong has noticed that many of the cadets have become involved in other activities outside of the program because of their involvement. One student is even going overseas as a member of the Army Cadets.

“At the beginning of the year, you’ll have kids who are shy and reserved. By the end of the year they’ve built up some confidence from taking part in all of the activities – you can just see the difference,” said Armstrong. “That’s the kind of stuff that lasts after the program and can be used by kids later in life.”



More information on the program is also available at <http://saskatoonpolice.ca/cadet/>.