



COURTESY OF SPRING LAKE HEIGHTS POLICE DEPARTMENT

Local police department officers were in attendance when Spring Lake Heights students enrolled in LEAD graduated from the anti-drug, -bullying and -violence program on Wednesday, Jan. 15.

Heights police LEAD students in ‘positive, pro-social’ class

Police and school emphasize rapport between cops and kids

BY SCOTT YUNKER
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SPRING LAKE HEIGHTS — Borough police officers visited Spring Lake Heights Elementary when school fifth-graders graduated a 10-week-long LEAD [Law Enforcement Against Drugs] program on Wednesday, Jan. 15.

Ptl. Ken Hager led the program, which addresses violence and bullying in addition to illegal drug use.

“I am fortunate to have a great group of students this year,” he said. “They were comfortable asking me any question that was on their mind.”

“I also made sure that all of the students knew that the classroom was going to be a place where they would not be judged or criticized by myself or others,” Ptl. Hager continued. “I try to create an environment where the

Spring Lake Heights students know they can always contact me or any other Spring Lake Heights officer with questions or concerns in their future.”

The curriculum taught by Ptl. Hager is called “Too Good for Drugs.” According to Ptl. Hager, the program “promotes positive, pro-social attitudes and behaviors, while creating healthy relationships, resistance to substance abuse and resistance to negative peer pressure and influence.”

Spring Lake Heights police and school leadership agreed LEAD is an example of the strong relationship between the two institutions.

“LEAD is a fantastic program which is a true indication of the partnership between the school and the SLHPD,” Superintendent John Spalthoff said. “Our students are fortunate to be able to create lasting relationships with our police officers and see them as both role models and mentors.”

“I have always supported police officers in the school throughout the day, and

more importantly, in the classrooms, interacting with the kids and personalizing our role as police officers in the community,” Chief of Police Ed Gunnel said. “The faculty, as well as the superintendent, welcome our presence in the school, and we appreciate that.”

Another officer, Ptl. Samantha Levy, teaches a LEAD curriculum for Spring Lake Heights Elementary’s first- and third-grade students, Chief Gunnel continued.

“We try to start that program early ... so the younger kids can see us in the school

and throughout the community, and they’re not shy when they see us on patrol,” he explained.

The department’s efforts to establish a rapport with Spring Lake Heights’s youngest residents appear to be successful.

“It’s a great feeling to see students that I have taught in the past yell out to me when I am on routine patrol, just to say hello and talk,” Ptl. Hager said.

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