Morrisville students applauded at recent D.A.R.E. graduation

By Ron Page

Wearing black T-shirts with the word D.A.R.E. emblazoned in red across the chest, some 100 fifth graders at the Morrisville Elementary School were individually praised and awarded certificates for completing a 17-week program this month on how to avoid drugs and alcohol and to boost their self image.

The nationwide Drug Abuse Resistance Program (D.A.R.E.) is funded locally by the Town of Morrisville and is given under the direction of the Morrisville Police Department and its specially-trained D.A.R.E. Officer Sgt. Felicia Sykes. The ceremony drew about 100 parents to a graduation ceremony at the school's auditorium.

The seed for D.A.R.E. began a decade ago in California by the Los Angeles Police Department and the Unified School District, Sgt. Sykes told the group, explaining that the course is given to fifth grade students in all tracks at the school, but that she makes visitations to grades kindergarten through four. Other track graduation ceremonies are set for next month at the school. D.A.R.E. nationwide has expanded in the past 10 years to middle and high school classes.

Sykes moderated the program which included a welcoming from Acting Principal Freda Cole and brief messages from Sgt. Allen Rushing, investigator with the Morrisville Police Department, who was the D.A.R.E. officer for two years at the elementary school.

"Say No to Drugs is about self esteem, peer pressure, about the kids you hang out with," he told the students. "Choose your friends carefully," he emphasized, adding that the education process is the only way to win the war. "And it is a war," he said. "If we as adults had the knowledge of knowing this while we were growing up we wouldn't have the problems we have today." And to the parents in the room, he added: "Don't ever forget what it was like to be that (their children's) age."

Then, to the recent graduates, he said: "If you have a problem, go to your parents, or teachers, and come to me or Sgt. Sykes. We'll help you."

Mayor Margaret Broadwell told the students she has two children, a son who will be 13 this summer and a daughter in the third grade at Northwood. "You have studied the text books and the point to remember is in the word 'choice.' Good and bad choices are made by everyone," she said, and good people can get off track at times. "You'll hear someone urge you to 'Come, do it this once. It won't hurt.' But you have to decide for yourself. You and only you can make the choice," she said.

The mayor concluded by telling the youngsters that things they do now can help their future. "Always remember the good things taught by your parents, the Morrisville Elementary School, and the police and that there's no failure that can't be righted in some way," she said

A FRIENDLY VISIT–Morrisville police Sgt. Felica Sykes, who teaches the D.A.R.E. program at Morrisville Elementary School, chats with winners of a recent essay contest. The students are Shawn Hallin and Leslie Bales. Heather Lassiter was also an essay winner.

Local firm offering health screening

Carolina Pharmacy & Home Health Care has opened for business in the ABC Plaza on Cary Parkway in Preston.

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