

5th Grade Mentoring Program

Upper Darby Police Department



POLICE SUPERINTENDENT MICHAEL J. CHITWOOD

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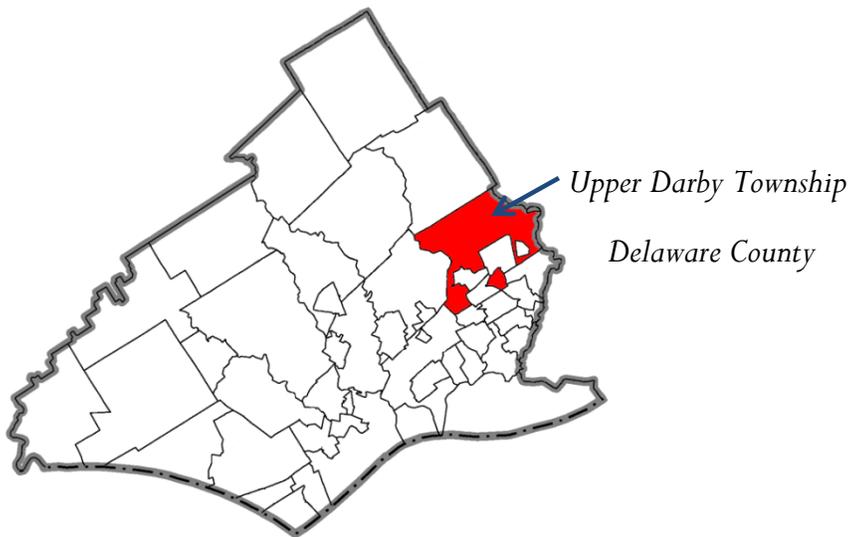


TOWNSHIP OF UPPER DARBY

Demographics

Township Demographics

The Township of Upper Darby, located in Delaware County, Pennsylvania is the largest municipality in the County. Bordering on West Philadelphia, the Township is located approximately 3 miles from Center City, Philadelphia. It is 8 square miles and has a population of over 82,000. It is the sixth most densely populated municipality in Pennsylvania. Over 100 different ethnic cultures are represented in this ethnically diverse community.



Upper Darby School District Demographics

The Upper Darby School District is a school district comprised of 12,388 students. There is one high school, two middle schools, eight elementary schools and one kindergarten center. There are 843 teachers employed by the Upper Darby School District and the Student/Teacher Ratio is 14.2. The budget for the 2011-2012 school year is \$156,279,450.

The Upper Darby School District's mission is to provide "a comprehensive and challenging educational program which encourages all learners in a safe environment to respect others, value education, and appreciate and contribute to their community as confident, independent thinkers."

5th Grade Mentoring Program

Upper Darby Police Department

Purpose of the Program

The purpose of the Upper Darby Police Department 5th Grade Mentoring Program is to foster a better understanding among students of the nature of police work, to encourage an open line of communication with the police department and to build a relationship of mutual trust and respect. It helps establish a personal relationship with officers so that the students view police officers as a friend and a resource. The mentoring program is designed to foster decision-making skills so that students can deal with issues that arise with peers in and out of the classroom.

The 5th Grade Mentoring Program has the full endorsement of Upper Darby Mayor Thomas Micozzie, the Superintendent of Police, Michael J. Chitwood, the staff of the Upper Darby Police Department and the Township School Administration.

Origin of the program

The Upper Darby Police Department's 5th Grade Mentoring Program was primarily the idea of Sgt. James Reif. In 2008, Sgt. Reif was asked to address the staff at Stonehurst Elementary School on the topic of lock-down drills and other police-related issues. During this meeting, one the 5th grade teacher's noted that she was experiencing many issues in her classroom including fights, thefts, bullying and constant class disruption. She asked Sgt. Reif if he would be interested in speaking to her class. She raised the issue of what she perceived as a very low opinion of the police by her students. She had asked them to write about their opinion of the Upper Darby Police Department.

Overwhelmingly, the students felt that the police could not be trusted and that the police harassed people without cause. Sgt. Reif decided that he wanted to work with the students to become more informed about the role police officers play in the community and help change the student's biases. It was decided that he would meet with the students on a monthly basis in the hopes of building trust, keeping the relationship with the students moving forward and maintaining an open line of communication. After several visits, the teacher noticed a decline in the number of incidents in the classroom and less overall disruption. She attributed this change to the work that was being done by Sgt. Reif.

Program Expansion

Due to the success of the program in 2008, Sgt. Reif decided to work with the 5th grade students again the following school year. Sgt. Reif worked with the same teacher during this year and followed the same format of monthly visits to the classroom where he worked on strategies to reduce fighting, bullying and other issues that surfaced during the year. He approached the Superintendent of Police, Michael J. Chitwood with his proposal for the program. Police Superintendent Chitwood endorsed the program and assigned four officers from the Upper Darby Bike Unit to serves as Mentors to the other 5th grade classes at Stonehurst Elementary School.

In 2010, due to the success of the program, the decision was made to expand the program beyond Stonehurst Elementary School to include 5th grade classrooms at Highland Park Elementary School and Bywood Elementary School. All three schools are feeder schools for Beverly Hills Middle School. With all three feeder schools participating in the program, all students entering Beverly Hills Middle School would have “graduated” from the Mentoring program and the hope was that the program would help alleviate behavioral issues such as bullying and fighting in the Middle School. A marked decrease in after school incidents occurred in 2010 and 2011. In addition, the students view of police officers from a negative one to a positive one. As a result of the program, officers who were working their school detail would often be approached in a positive, friendly manner by school students after school dismissal.

Two other elementary schools, Garrettford Elementary School and The Charles Kelly School, were added to the program during 2010. In 2011, Hillcrest Elementary School and Westbrook Park Elementary School were incorporated into the program.

Current Program Scope

Monthly visits to 33 5th grade classrooms by UDPD Officers

7 Upper Darby School District Elementary Schools participating

- Stonehurst Elementary School
- Highland Park Elementary School
- Bywood Elementary School
- Garrettford Elementary School
- The Charles Kelly School
- Hillcrest Elementary School
- Westbrook Park Elementary School

33 Upper Darby Police Officers serve as Mentors

Over 800 5th grade students participating in the Mentoring Program

Timeline for Program Development

The current plan is to add two elementary schools each year until every 5th grade classroom in the Upper Darby School District is part of the mentoring program. The projected timeline for bringing all schools onboard by the end of 2013.