

Ken VanFleet

From: Sullivan, Michele [MicheleSullivan@NRWCS.ORG]
Sent: Tuesday, April 12, 2011 9:35 AM
To: kvanfleet@marshallbio.com; Walker, John
Cc: Thompson, Neil; 'David Smith'
Subject: Please read for board tonight

Dear Wolcott Town Board Members,

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Michele Sullivan and I am the principal of the NR-W Middle School here in Wolcott. I am unable to attend tonight's meeting but would like to say a few words on behalf of the Village police and especially Chief Dave Smith. Last year when NYS cut the school resource officer program many schools were faced with the devastating loss of positive, pro-active police presence with in the schools. This presence often helped calm tense situations, counsel kids who were on the brink of taking the wrong path in life, often aided school administrators with situations involving illegal activity and allowed kids to develop a relationship with the police that supported solid citizenship.

In an effort to fill this gap many schools looked for ways to gain funding thru grants, volunteers and adding more responsibilities to already busy school staff. Ben Kauder and I went in a different direction and contacted the Village police department. The person who responded to our contact was Chief Dave Smith.

Dave came and met with me in early September of this school year and we sat down and discussed what he could do to help support this particular building as it is the only building with students who walk to school, is often the site for kids to play basketball after school hours/weekends and tends to have "skaters" present on the front lawn daily. I explained that having him just be present for unstructured times like lunch, arrival and dismissal would be a huge help, just so he could be seen by the kids and the parents. I also explained that the corner of Northup and Washington is often a "hangout" or as we call it "smokers corner" for HS kids before/after school and since it is NOT school property I have no authority over any student lingering there. Additionally we discussed our building safety plan, lockdown procedures and other items where in the past Ben had assisted me in managing.

Dave was gracious enough to say that he thought he could make his presence known at arrival/dismissal times by simply parking near our building so parents and other traffic slowed down and were more aware of our walkers. He also asked if I would mind him coming in to have lunch with the kids or to just walk thru the building at the lunch times. I agreed whole heartedly. He requested a school calendar so he could mark dates for when we had special events so that he could help with traffic and be aware of the extra people in the village. On the night of our annual Halloween Dance Dave made sure to patrol more often near the school as I mentioned we typically would get HS kids lurking around who wanted to cause mischief.

Since that day, Dave has been a regular visitor to the building, students know him by name, parents have commented that they know their kids are safe walking to school in the dark because he is seen before school hours in the village and staff knows that the school and department are partnering together to keep the community safe. Dave ALWAYS signs in to the building and notifies either myself or my assistant principal when he is in the building, he provided us with his cell phone and always responds when we call. He has assisted us with numerous situations where we needed police involvement, one as simple as retrieving 2 students who left the building during the school day another including a case of 2 students who had been abducted by their father (a convicted abuser and violent offender) from Texas and were hiding out here in our school district. Dave did much of the research and leg work contacting the child protective agency in Texas for us and was a vital part in returning the children to their home state. An additional incident in which Dave was proactive and helped deter a major fight occurred when a HS student threatened to jump one of our MS students with a number of his friends. Dave met the bus that the HS student was exiting and met with the students and prevented a violent incident from occurring without the need for force or confrontation.

It is my understanding that some individuals have made accusations against Dave for personal gain. I am disheartened that the school and any of its employees have been brought into such a childish behavior. Dave has been nothing but supportive and appreciated by the building administration and I have not seen any other Wolcott Police representatives reaching out to the school community as Dave has done. I can not even provide you with another officer's full name after 4 years of being principal here.

I appreciate your time tonight and hope that you will reflect for a few moments before deciding to make sweeping changes to the police department budget. While I understand the perception is "bad things" happen after dark, I feel that the relationships Chief Dave Smith has fostered with students this year is a positive force in helping kids stay off the streets at night and recognizing that they need to be respectful of their community and their police force. Cutting his daytime hours back would not allow this positive presence to continue and I believe it will increase the negative behaviors after hours.

Thank you for your time. Please feel free to contact me at school if you have any questions.

Michele Sullivan

6-8 Principal

NR-W Middle School

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