



SALEM POLICE DEPARTMENT NEWS RELEASE

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POLICE CHIEF JAMES R. BRYANT WINS STATEWIDE D.A.R.E. AWARD

Salem Police Chief, James Bryant, has been named the state of Virginia's D.A.R.E. administrator of the year. The prestigious honor was presented to the veteran law enforcement official by Virginia State Master Trooper Gene Ayers, the state's coordinator for D.A.R.E. programs.

"It's humbles me to receive an award like this because it couldn't happen without a team effort," says Chief Bryant. "All of the great people I work with at the Salem Police Department helped make this possible, and they also help make our D.A.R.E. program so successful every year."

Bryant has been a member of the Salem Police Department for 42 years, and even before he was named its Chief 13 years ago he knew the importance of the D.A.R.E. program. In 1991, he became the first director of Salem Camp D.A.R.E. – an eight week-long program that wrapped up its 18th summer of educating the city's young people with a successful combination of fun in the sun and life lessons this past August.

"To work in the D.A.R.E. program you have to have the drive and compassion for the kids," he says. "The youth have to come first and you must have that drive to put them first."

Bryant was nominated for the award by one of his own officers, Rob Hefner, the current President of the Virginia D.A.R.E. Officers Association.

"D.A.R.E. is a forethought in Salem not an afterthought like it is in so many other places," says Officer Hefner. "Here it is a priority, and it's really a rarity to find an administrator and a city to stand behind a D.A.R.E. program like Chief Bryant and Salem do."

This past summer, 205 rising 7th graders from Andrew Lewis Middle School took part in the eight summer sessions at Camp Bethel in Botetourt County. That's a huge jump from 1991 when just 67 youngsters participated in the inaugural camp.

During the free, week-long camps, the boys and girls interact with counselors and police officers in a variety of activities ranging from wagon rides to the trust building low ropes course. Life skills are taught daily by the officers as they stress the importance of having good communications skills along with a positive self-image.

"I would have to say that Salem's D.A.R.E. program is the gold standard," says Trooper Ayers. "Chief Bryant and the folks in Salem have one of the best programs I've seen anywhere and I've traveled all over this country and the world."

Salem was one of the original thirteen jurisdictions included in Virginia's Drug Abuse Resistance Education - D.A.R.E. efforts.

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