

## **Guest Column By Chief Navor- Help Our Young People Avoid Trouble**

In law enforcement we often see young adults repeatedly make the same mistakes over and over. Drinking and driving, drug experimentation, alcohol poisoning, preventable accidents, etc. The names and faces change, but the mistakes we see stay the same. True wisdom is the result of life experience, but sometimes wisdom can be achieved, and negative experiences avoided, through proper guidance. Science concludes that the human brain is still developing until a person is 23-25 years of age, therefore it can be deduced that guidance and education can certainly aid young adults in making sound choices.

With that said, here are some positive things that occur locally to provide such guidance to our younger generation. The Oneonta Police Department teaches the DARE program (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) to children in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades. The primary purpose of DARE is to educate children and help them to form the ability to make good choices and decisions as they go through life. The new DARE model teaches children to Define problems, Assess choices, Respond with a choice, and to Evaluate the decision made. This model doesn't just apply to drug experimentation but to decision making in general. It's an accepted fact that people will make mistakes because that's part of life, but the mistakes can be significantly decreased if sound decision making skills in relation to consequences are taught at a young age.

Locally, another tremendous resource to help guide our youth is the Oneonta Boy's and Girl's Club. This organization is located on River Street in the City of Oneonta, and for 60 years has been providing a safe place for kids to learn and develop. The club is open to all children and teens aged 6-16 and provides after school and evening activities. Kids can engage in sports such as basketball, archery, wrestling, and boxing. They can also gain wisdom from the mentoring that is part of the club. Additionally, children can receive support on schoolwork, and learn arts and crafts while there. The boys and girls club welcomes everyone from this area and is a great place for children to learn and grow. For more information about the club, go to [www.oneontaboysandgirlsclub.com](http://www.oneontaboysandgirlsclub.com)

At the college level, we hope that young adults have developed the strong decision making skills needed for the challenges and peer pressures which present themselves at that age. To assist however, we at the OPD have created a "Good Neighbor Brochure." The brochure outlines the importance of good behavior while attending college and clarifies the Police Department's, along with the community's expectations. All students at both local colleges receive these brochures either in their orientation packet or electronically through email. If students follow the advice provided in the brochures, they will significantly minimize the chance for getting into trouble. Additionally, we present in person to fraternities, sororities, and incoming students at orientation so that we can answer questions and provide valuable information to help safely guide them through their formative years of college.

As adults, we owe it to the new generation of kids, teens, and young adults to provide proper guidance to assist them in making good choices. Daily, I see firsthand the cost of mistakes that some make and I know that proper guidance and mentoring would've minimized some of those mistakes. As you read this article, please consider if you are in the position to provide guidance to someone who needs it. Whether you are a parent, coach, teacher, big brother, big sister, friend, etc., you are in a position to do a lot of good. Please think of ways to help mentor and guide someone because when you do, you will not only be helping one individual, but you'll be doing a service to our community as a whole. When this happens, we all benefit.