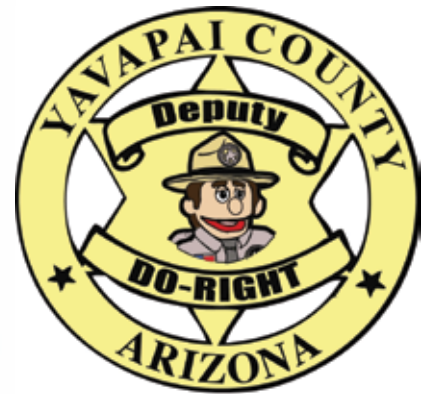




# Yavapai County Sheriff's Office is "Right by Kids"

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For this Sheriff's Office, child safety education is a laughing matter. Sheriff Steve Waugh and the Yavapai County Sheriff's Office take a unique approach to educating children about safety. The tools of this trade include a friendly faced mascot, magic tricks and a stable of character puppets. Their effort, known as the "Right by Kids" Child Safety Program, is in high demand across all 8000 square miles of this county in northern Arizona. One look at a key deputy involved in the "Right by Kids" program might lead you to believe that success has gone to his head. His name is Deputy Do-Right and the size of his head is strictly by design. He is the program's mascot, the centerpiece of the Right by Kids Child Safety Program.

In 2005, newly elected Sheriff Steve Waugh was faced with a challenge very familiar to leaders in law enforcement; educating the community and children about safety while balancing enforcement needs of the public. While taking a close look at the need, Sheriff Waugh recognized that early childhood safety education was often overlooked when it came to tough subjects, such as drugs and bullying. It is well known within law enforcement that drug awareness education is not typically delivered to kids until they are in the fifth or sixth grade. Experts now agree that concepts and strategies geared towards drugs and other dangers can be understood by children as early as kindergarten. With that in mind, YCSO set out to create education plans that would be effective in guiding even the youngest of children towards safety and security. YCSO's Right

by Kids lesson topics do include anti-drug messages, but also bullying, gun safety, cyber safety, bike and ATV safety. On top of that, deputies are able to respond to specific requests from schools or other community groups. Additional presentations have been catered to include such subjects as anger management, problem solving and self respect.

During the design stage, the creators of the Right by Kids program understood that providing a program with substance was of the utmost importance. The presentations needed to be more than just entertaining for young children. They needed to be meaningful and most importantly memorable! That's where Deputy Do-Right comes in. A mascot, utilized properly and responsibly, can be a powerful educational tool that reinforces ideas and valuable principles. Think about it, surely you can recall slogans used by such mascot icons as Smokey Bear and McGruff. And from a marketing aspect, think about corporate mascots like Ronald McDonald and the Gieko gecko. You immediately recall who they are and what they represent. Familiarity and consistency is very important to children. Visual reminders and repetition are effective methods in childhood education and Deputy Do-Right's smiling face works to reinforcing safe practices. Do-Right doesn't just create product recognition, he helps to build relationships of trust and goodwill between the public and the sheriff's office.

Innovative programs and mascots often come with a story and a slogan. Deputy Do-Right grew up wanting to be a law



style. A local band, The Ripptones, volunteered their time and talents for the event. Their renditions of well known rock songs from the sixties and seventies featured altered lyrics that provided lessons about bullying, drugs, stranger safety and 9-1-1 emergencies. Perhaps the highlight for the audience was watching Deputy Do-Right magically transform from a small child to a full grown Deputy, then take to the drums and perform with the band. The show was a great experience for the sheriff's office and the entire community.

Most often, law enforcement officers are hesitant to showcase their programs and abilities. Most of us find it enough to be professionally satisfied just knowing that we do good work every day. It may feel odd, but "tooting your own horn" can also be a great way to create inroads and partnerships with those that we serve. Since our community "show" at the Elks Opera House in Prescott, our requests for safety presentations have greatly increased and our messages are working their way into family conversations.

The use of a mascot and any unconventional teaching method must always be approached responsibly and professionally. At the Yavapai County Sheriff's Office we know that we are reaching toward our program goals when we receive notes of thanks. A Head Start director recently wrote, "Thank you for taking time to come to our little

enforcement officer. From a young age he worked towards that goal and made the right choices. He stayed away from drugs, worked hard, and always treated others with respect. He shares his slogan with kids everywhere he goes; "YOU WIN OR LOSE BY THE WAY YOU CHOOSE!" This theme rings loud and clear during every public appearance he makes. The success of the program is certainly measured, in part, by the great number of kids that quote the slogan to deputies after weeks and even months following a lesson or school assembly.

The Yavapai County Sheriff's Office uses a team effort when it comes to implementing this program. Two full-time deputies known as Law Enforcement-Education Deputies and a Crime Prevention Specialist write and perform specialized presentations that adhere to specific curriculum. It is the skillful blending of magic, music and puppetry with vital safety messages that make this program unique. In August 2010 the Right by Kids team took their "show" to the stage on a much larger scale. Utilizing local partnerships YCSO rented out the historical Elks Opera House in downtown Prescott, Arizona and invited the community to come out for a Saturday of safety training - Right by Kids



center and sharing your talents. The children are still talking about your visit. They do realize that you are the "GOOD" guys and not to be afraid. Thank you for all you do in your line of work."

Perhaps more telling of our success comes from a grade school boy who drew us a picture of Deputy Do-Right and scribbled a note saying, "Deputy Do-Right, thanks for saving our lives!" 🌟