

D.A.R.E.
To Dream of Our
FUTURE

By Brooklyn Kuna

D.A.R.E., Drug Abuse Resistance Education, is one of the key components of my fifth grade education. D.A.R.E. was established in 1983 in Los Angeles, California, by a collaboration of dedicated teachers and police officers in order to inform juveniles of the harsh realities associated with drug and alcohol abuse. D.A.R.E. is utilized in our schools with the hope that our generation will blossom into dignified young adults who lead fulfilling, drug alcohol free lives. The more citizens who are committed to the pledge of avoiding drugs and alcohol, the more desirable our society will be for humanity.

Experiencing and learning through the D.A.R.E. program enabled me to prepare myself to make the best overall decisions when faced with challenges such as peer pressure, communication styles, leadership skills among friends, and rejecting drugs and alcohol. One important aspect that I learned was about peer pressure. When it comes to peer pressure, I learned that I have choices and I know it is okay to say “no” to situations that are dangerous or wrong. I also learned that there are three types of communication styles, which are: unsure, confident and demanding. The best communication style is confident because you are responding to a situation knowing the right things to do and say in order to avoid problems. Confidence also leads to leadership skills among friends, which I learned about in D.A.R.E. When you have leadership among your friends, you are helping to lead your friends down the right path by showing positive examples and avoiding being a follower. Having leadership skills among friends is important as we grow into teenagers because you will attract good groups of friends and be less likely to get into harmful situations that involve drugs and alcohol. All of these factors ultimately help young people to reject drugs and alcohol. But the simplest phrase to remember is, “Just say no!”

Next, there are many shocking facts that I learned while participating in the D.A.R.E. program. Some of the most astounding facts that I learned were about alcohol and tobacco. Did you know that there are over 75,000 alcohol related deaths each year? This is a number that is hard to imagine so to give you a better idea, picture two professional football stadiums filled with fans and multiply that number of fans by two. It is very sad to know that a number so large represents people who die due to alcohol related situations each year. What if that included someone that you loved? Another shocking fact about alcohol is that it weakens almost every part of your body and it reduces the amount of blood pumped to and from your heart. Not only is this a negative health effect, it is frightening and alarming to think that alcohol can weaken your heart. Not only is alcohol dangerous, so is tobacco. A surprising statistic about tobacco is that there are over 400,000 deaths a year due to tobacco...and that is just in America. Maybe if people knew that there are over 200 known harmful chemicals in cigarette smoke, they would put the cigarettes down sooner than later, before it is too late! I know that I will be staying away from alcohol and tobacco in my future!

D.A.R.E. was such a wonderful experience, and it was amazing for me because I looked forward to it every single Monday. I enjoyed learning during every session, but there are some events that represent my favorite parts of the program. I really enjoyed the opportunities we had to act out different scenarios in D.A.R.E. class. Role playing for our class was a great way to make lessons come to life and

be more realistic. We were able to get creative with our friends and make up skits according to different topics. I also really appreciated and enjoyed when the Munster High School Students came to visit our school and talk to us about transferring into middle school and making the right decisions. They spoke about many things that were already familiar to us through D.A.R.E., and it was inspiring for us to learn from some of the older students who made the right decisions and took the right paths. The best overall part of D.A.R.E. was having Officer Ghrist as our teacher. Officer Ghrist always came to D.A.R.E. class with a smile on his face and he was always positive with a story to share. We even had a stuffed animal mascot that Officer Ghrist would bring to class. Our mascot was Daren the Lion, and one lucky person got to hold him and stroke his frizzy hair during class. We are very thankful for everything that we learned through Office Ghrist's experiences and what he shared with us.

In conclusion, the D.A.R.E. program provided all 5th grade students with information that we learned to help us lead a drug free life. I plan on using this information in my daily life as a middle schooler and continuing on throughout high school and one day, even college. I can make this possible by remembering everything we learned and using my knowledge to make the right decisions. I, Brooklyn Kuna, pledge to lead a life free from drugs and alcohol. I pledge to make the best decisions and help those around me as well.

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