

Camp helps police build relationships with kids

Kids and Kops | Week-long event gives youngsters a glimpse into an officer's life

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To the casual observer, it might have looked like a major police operation on the north side of Fredericton.

Four police cars, sirens blaring, and a group of excited children, many screaming at the top of their lungs, congregated in the parking lot of Willie O'Ree Place on Tuesday morning.

This wasn't an operation to sweep junior criminals off the streets. The group of youngsters gathered Tuesday to meet the police were juvenile trainee cops.

They lined up single file waiting for a demonstration of Fredericton Police Force driving techniques — short, speedy bursts, stops and turns in a marked cruiser steering through a course outlined with pylons in the empty parking lot.

From inside the vehicles, kids used bullhorns to shout: "Pull over. Police."

"That's how my mom drives," said 10-year-old Mimigés Francis, who goes to Harold Sappier Memorial Elementary School.

The Fredericton Police Force partners with four community groups, St. Mary's First Nation, the Fredericton Boys and Girls Club, Big Brothers, Big Sisters and the Multicultural Association of Fredericton, to put on the Kids and Kops day camp for 12 children aged 8-12.

The camp runs all week and gives kids the opportunity to experience life on the other side of the badge.

"The theme of the week is the mystery crime," said Const. Duncan Lombard. "So they have to try and solve that crime."

"We went to a break and enter scene yesterday and we had our identification people come up ... Part of the week is also looking for all these clues to solve the mystery crime, then it ends with us, obviously, arresting the bad guy."

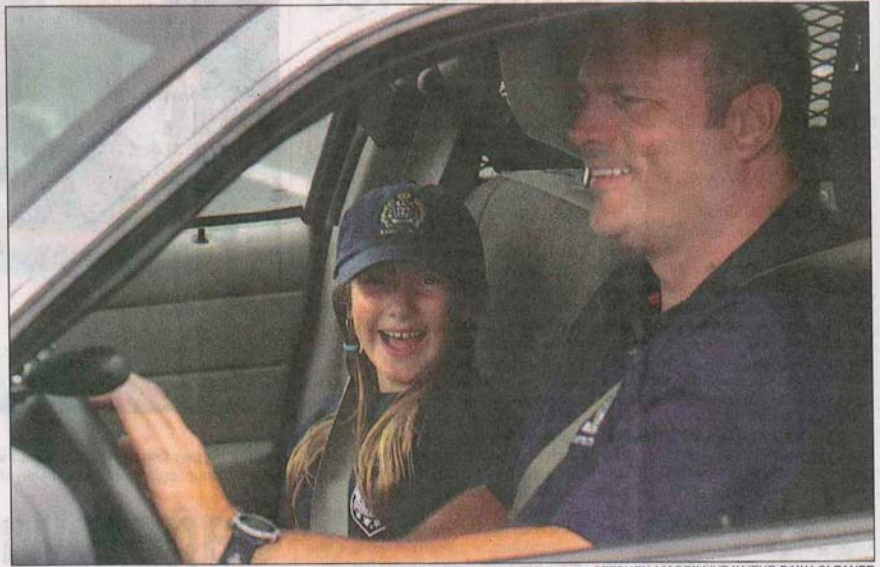
Before they wrap up their week of peering into how officers do their job, the dozen youngsters will have some time for fun. They'll go to the Bucket Club recreational vehicle and water park on Woodstock Road to participate in an Amazing Race-style activity around the city. They've already toured Fredericton's Queen Street police station and they'll be given a tour of the city's Two Nations Crossing fire station and participate in a mock trial.

"It's all about building those positive relationships. Some of the kids get really attached to the officers they're working with ... by the end of the week some of these officers are really getting to know some of these kids and that's what it's really about," Lombard said.

It's the fourth annual camp in Fredericton and some of the officers have participated each year.

"They're really keen on it and there's a lot of enthusiasm on our end of it," Lombard said.

Const. Steve Cliff set up the driving course and was one of the officers



STEPHEN MACGILLIVRAY/THE DAILY GLEANER

We'll catch the bad guys: Taylor Brewer, 8, is all smiles as she gets to ride in a police car with Fredericton Police Force Const. Steve Cliff on Tuesday as part of the Kids and Kops summer camp.

taking kids for rides.

"A lot of them just whoop and holler and scream, 'Go faster,'" he said.

Taylor Brewer, 8, rode through the driving course more than five times. She said she's now thinking about becoming a crime scene investigator when she grows up.

"When we went to the house and when we started to search for stuff, I thought it was really cool. And knowing that I was actually in a real police station for the first time, I thought that was pretty cool."

The police department provides breakfast, lunch and snacks for the

kids. The camp is free.

"It's really worthwhile," Lombard said. "(The) kids really enjoy being able to participate in it. It's really all about the children, letting them meet the police officers and taking in some activities that they would consider quite fun."

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