

PAK (POLICE AND KIDS) UNITED PROGRAM

How Mt. Vernon Police Department Created a Successful Program for Community Impact



AT A GLANCE

Creating the Program

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OVERVIEW

Over the past two years, the Mount Vernon Police Department in Mt. Vernon, Ohio, has been working to become a model for community engagement. Their efforts have not gone unnoticed, as they became the first recipients of LAW Publications' "Community Impact Award" in 2021. They received this award as recognition for their achievement in creating a lasting positive impact on their community through the creation of their PAK (Police and Kids) United program.

CHALLENGES

Fostering community engagement and collaboration is a goal for law enforcement agencies, big and small, across the country. However, this task is easier said than done. With their finite resources, departments have to determine the best way to create and host events and programs that will engage their community within their means and bounds.

SOLUTIONS

Mt. Vernon Police Department utilized the knowledge of their School Resource Officer (SRO) to create a program tailored to their community. Their events became an instant success, garnering support from local officials, businesses, and residents.



"We are proud of the ongoing partnerships between our organization and the community and this is another reminder of just how healthy and unique the relationships are between our officers and the citizens we serve. We are looking forward to future collaborations to create innovative new programs and be a model for other communities."

Chief Robert Morgan

Mt. Vernon Police Department

CREATING THE PROGRAM

The PAK United program was initially created with the purpose of utilizing Mount Vernon's School Resource Officer (SRO), Jeremiah Armstrong, during the summer when school was out of session. The goal of the program at inception was to engage local youth who might not have access to typical summer activities due to circumstances such as complex family situations or distance from city neighborhoods and parks.

As the SRO for Mount Vernon Middle School, High School, and the Knox County Career Center, Officer Armstrong regularly spends time with the kids in his community during the school year. With his responsibilities as an SRO and a patrolling officer, Armstrong learns a lot about the personal situations of the students in his community, which gave him the desire to provide a place of refuge for students both after school throughout the academic year and during the summer.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

PAK United is in some ways a resurrected version of a prior Mount Vernon PD program called "Kickball with the Cops." Rightfully so, the first event hosted by the new program was a kickball game at Mount Vernon Nazarene University on July 22, 2021. Nearly 40 local children participated in the event, playing kickball with officers from the department. While the original idea was for this event to be a soft launch of the program and gauge community interest, their first event did well enough to evoke community support, including from city administration. This allowed the PAK United program to be expanded past a summer-only program, and now events are being hosted year-round.

Since the initial kickball event, PAK United has hosted a multitude of events with community partners and sponsors, including a fishing event at a local park, a dodgeball tournament, and a soccer game. Events will continue to be hosted throughout the year, as Mount Vernon PD fine-tunes their program, setting a great example for surrounding communities.



**INAUGURAL EVENT
"KICKBALL WITH THE
COPS" HAD NEARLY
40 LOCAL
PARTICIPANTS**



**OTHER EVENTS
INCLUDE FISHING AT
A LOCAL PARK, A
DODGEBALL
TOURNAMENT, AND
A SOCCER GAME**

RESULTS

The PAK United program has received support from not only city officials but local businesses as well, garnering sponsorships and donations for the program. As the program grows, it continues to gain support and recognition from the community. This program not only provides a valuable opportunity for local youth to build positive relationships with police officers, but it also provides an important outlet for the middle and high schoolers who attend the events. LAW Publications' "Community Impact Award" is sure to be the first of many commendations awarded to Mount Vernon PD for their successful community engagement programs.



Learn more about Mount Vernon and PAK United:



PAK United



Mount Vernon Police Department (MVPDOH)



mvpd.mountvernonohio.org