



City of Virginia Beach

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December 15, 2014

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to endorse the work of Strategies for Youth and describe how it has helped our Department bridge the gap between police and youth. We have trained several classes of officers in Policing the Teen Brain as well as developed a cadre of trainers who can provide the training to officers in our Department.

To explain why we see this as a critical tool on an officer's belt, I cite the speech I gave to the graduating Police Academy Class of 2014:

"We are now training out officers in areas that enlarge the role of the police in the community from responding to problems, to engaging the community collaboratively in preventing, detecting, and solving crimes with an equal emphasis on the quality of life in our community. This expansion of training has extended into several areas, to include basic mental illness responses...and training and equipping our officers with AEDs so that we may respond quickly to patients who are suffering from cardiac arrest, expanding our emergency medical capacities to include tourniquets that assist us in stopping uncontrolled bleeding in people who have suffered a serious injury; and in this academy we are now including training specific to our role and the manner in which we interact with the children of our community with the Strategies for Youth program. As Deputy Chief Zucaro often reminds me, 'It's not just cops and robbers anymore.'"

In addition to the training, SFY helped us structure stronger relationships with youth serving community based organizations. Our officers were inspired and actually developed an app for officers' phones which provides immediate information on program services for youth that can be used in lieu of sending youth to court—for services they are unlikely to get in the juvenile justice system. We've also rewritten our police procedures to reflect 21st century approaches premised on evidence-based research.

SFY has helped us rethink how we can best serve youth and that has helped us rethink how we improve public safety in Virginia Beach.

Sincerely,

James A. Cervera
Chief of Police