



South Williamsport

{AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT}



Oct. 14, 2018

South Williamsport receives \$60,000 grant for school safety

This summer, the Pennsylvania Department of Education office of Safe Schools, received over 900 competitive grant applications for school safety equipment and school resource officers. The South Williamsport Area School District was recently notified that it was awarded a \$60,000 grant for a School Resource Officer (SRO). South Williamsport Police Officer, Mike Samar has been serving as the SRO in the district since the first day of school. The grant will fully cover the program this year.

In the short amount of time in his role, Officer Samar has been active in improving district-wide security and educating students and staff about safety.

“This is new for me,” he said. “As the school year progresses, the expectations of my role grow and we are finding needs that once went unnoticed.”

Dr. Mark Stamm, Superintendent, is excited about the grant and grateful to have Officer Samar in the schools. “This was a long process that required the combined effort of borough police Chief Robert Hetner, borough council and the school board.”

In the fall of 2017, district students participated in the Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS), a survey distributed by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency across the commonwealth to gather data about middle and high school students’ experiences with alcohol, drugs, tobacco, and violence. Results from the survey showed administrative staff that though the juvenile crime levels in the borough are low, it does not mean there are no other issues placing students at risk.

“The numbers from the report were higher than anticipated so we are grateful that Officer Samar is here to put necessary resources in place for students to utilize,” he said.

Officer Samar said he takes a preventative policing standpoint to help students by doing classroom presentations and chatting one-on-one; “We’re making connections and building relationships,” he added.

One of his most recent successes was improving the crossing guard program. He created a more efficient schedule to best serve the students and parents before and after school. The most effective action was to close off West Mountain Avenue in front of Central Elementary School to make it safer for young students walking and crossing the street.



Officer Mike Samar proudly serves as the School Resource Officer working to instill safety and security across the school district.

Previously fourth graders could volunteer with the crossing guards which changed to sixth graders this fall. Students who are a few years older can play a bigger leadership role helping the crossing guards. The student volunteers lend a helping hand to stop students from walking across the street while the crossing guard is focused on the cars.

To keep teachers informed, he has also completed ALICE training presentations so all staff members are prepared. Students throughout the school district have learned about different topics such as criminal law and basic safety skills. Officer Samar's role in each building is tailored to meet the needs of students and staff.

"The high school students asked so many questions during my criminal law presentation," he said. "It was great to see them interested in the topic. We ran out of time."

Additional duties of the SRO include management and training of district event security staff. With his leadership, there are now security staff at every public event who are receiving training in ALICE and basic emergency medical care.

He hopes that as time goes on he will get to serve the school in more ways and continue to keep everyone safe to the best of his ability.

Dr. Stamm said the district continues to seek funding opportunities through grants such as this to expand programs and offer more opportunities to students, staff, and the community. In this past year, the district has received over \$80,000 in grants he added and additional grants are in the works.