

For Immediate Release

Contact: Kristie Williams
Phone: 256.651.8947
Email: kristie@elisblockparty.org

Girl Scout aids Madison Police in Community Policing with Trading Cards

[MADISON, ALABAMA, September 28, 2019==] Girl Scout Ambassador Abbey Williams created trading cards of officers with the Madison Police Department as a way to shed a more heroic light on the service they provide. Eighteen officers, including two K-9's, participated and have the cards ready to hand out to kids as part of a community policing initiative. The cards feature the officer's picture, plus personal information on the back ranging from where they received training to their favorite food.

"It just seems like lately you see in the news where police officers are disrespected so much, like people denying to serve them at restaurants, songs are written about hating police. I've seen where people spit at them and yell at them for just doing their job which is to keep us safe," Williams said. "I wanted to try to do something to change how people see officers," she said.

The high school junior said that research in the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention from January 2018 shows youth-to-police interaction makes the biggest impact on developing attitudes toward the police later in life. Based on this information, Williams decided to create trading cards, like baseball cards, of officers for them to give out and create a positive early interaction with kids, thereby influencing perception and attitudes later. She said, her research showed that negative attitudes grow a divide between law enforcement and communities making it hard for law enforcement agencies to keep communities safe. Furthermore, individuals with negative attitudes toward police are more likely to be unlawful.

"With a more positive attitude toward police from an early age, kids will grow up to influence their communities. This will begin to change the perception of police officers," Williams said. "Plus, older youth will be less likely to get into trouble with law enforcement if they have a positive experience with law enforcement when they are young," she said.

As a tool for the Madison Police Department's Community Policing division, the cards help to connect officers and the community. Williams created "Team Blue Blaze" as a kind of team for the officers who volunteered to have cards created similar to athletes who have trading cards are on a team. Additional departments are encourage to join Team Blue Blaze and make their own cards by downloading the card template from her website at www.scoutingforgold.com.

The project is for Williams's Girl Scout Gold Award. The award is the highest award a girl can earn. Williams has been a girl scout for 12 years with the North-Central Alabama Service Unit and Troop 10388. She is a high school junior at Athens Bible School and daughter to Victor and Kristie Williams, of Athens, Alabama. The project is in memory of Williams's 12-year-old brother, Eli, who died from brain cancer and was an avid fan of Law Enforcement.

"Maybe a kid will get a trading card and one day grow up to be the police officer that Eli didn't get to be," Williams said.

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