

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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February 24, 2010

**Contact:**

Debbie George

757-514-4106

757-374-1770

### **Corporate Sponsorships Help Fund Youth Public Safety Academy**

SUFFOLK, Va. (February 24, 2010) – Suffolk’s annual Youth Public Safety Academy began on February 12<sup>th</sup> thanks to generous donations from Wal Mart and Target. The program is designed to introduce at risk youth to public safety fields, foster an interest in the sciences, and create positive mentoring relationships with youth. Each year the program has faced challenging economic environments, but through grants from Target and Wal Mart, the program was once again available for eighteen more teens ages 13 to 17.

The Youth Public Safety Academy, one of the plan outcomes of the Suffolk Initiative on Youth, is an afterschool program, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:30pm to 7pm. Youth are treated to classes in public safety specialties, such as using fire extinguishers and processing crime scenes. For the first time, the academy is incorporating a service learning curriculum developed by Alternatives in Hampton, Virginia. The goal of the service learning program is to teach youth that they can be effective change agents in their community regardless of their life circumstances.

This year, the 18 enrolled students were asked to identify a community need, and overwhelmingly their response was a desire to feed the hungry. The next several weeks will be spent developing and implementing a service project that will impact the hungry in the City of Suffolk. The academy will complete two service learning projects before the end of the eleven week program.

“We could not have implemented this program without the gracious contributions of the College Drive Wal Mart and Target Corporation, who donated a total of \$2,300, approximately half the total cost of the program.” said Chief Thomas E. Bennett. Target and Wal Mart are both regular financial sponsors of City of Suffolk public safety initiatives such to include National Night Out and Identi- Kid programs, and now, our Youth Public Safety Academy. These monetary donations are used to fund the ropes course, the cost of nightly meals for the youth, as well as uniform shirts.

The program runs through the first week of May.