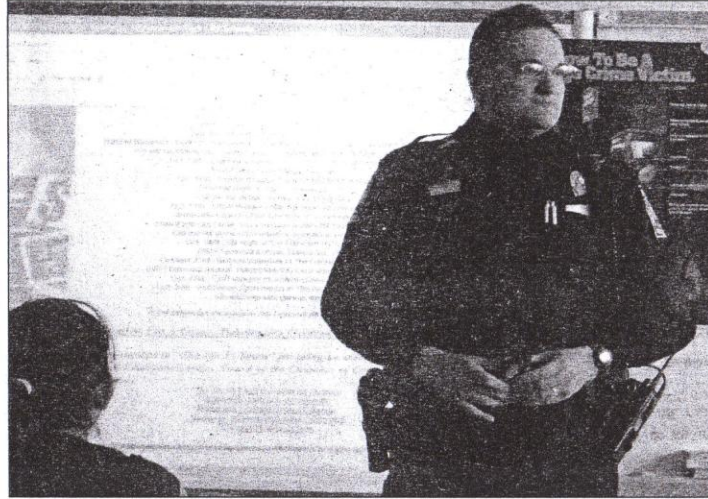


Manassas Park Middle joins Joe 15 Team

By EILEEN GRAHAM
Observer staff

Manassas Park Middle School students who joined the area's fifth Joe 15 Team learned what it was all about at their first meeting. Debbie Page-Maples, the club's creator, took a deep breath to explain why she was standing in front of the students.



Eileen Graham / the Manassas Observer

Officer Matthew Fallon of the Manassas Park police department spoke about crime prevention at the Joe 15 Team's first meeting at Manassas Park Middle School.

"On Feb. 3, 2008, my son Joe was shot," Page-Maples began, explaining that her son had been at a party on Allegheny Road at which there was a fight over a dance contest. Some of the people who were asked to leave returned soon after and shot at the house. "My son happened to be standing on the porch and a bullet hit him." Joseph "Joe" Page, 20, was the only victim of the attack. He died.

Students had lined the halls outside his room, and Page-Maples said the young people helped her in her grief. "They would tell me sto-

ries about my son. I wanted to direct that compassion into the community," she said. "I just kept thinking that I had to do something and honor my son, Joe, at the same time."

By April of 2008, Page-Maples had begun the Joe 15 movement, a club named after her son and his favorite number.

At the Team's first Manassas Park Middle meeting of nearly 40 students, Matthew Fallon, Manassas Park police officer, gave a crime prevention presentation on taking safety seriously and how not to be a victim. Fallon advised students that being aware is key in preventing everyday crime.

Jaylan Miller, 13, an eighth-grader, joined the team because he used to do community service when he lived in North Carolina. "I just wanted to keep it as a thing I continuously do," he said.

To date, the Joe 15 Team,

which began with friends and family, has been introduced to Brentsville and Stonewall Jackson high schools, Stonewall and Manassas Park middle schools and Manassas Christian School.

In 2009, the club was honored by SERVE Inc. as the Volunteer of the Year. This year, the club was given the 2010 Agnes L. Colgan Community Service award by the Prince William County-Greater Manassas Chamber of Commerce. It is presented to nonprofit organizations for outstanding community service.

So far, the group has met its goals of refurbishing a room at SERVE, offering two \$1,500 scholarships a year and extending service opportunities to Fairfax County court system's nonviolent offenders.

Their current projects include Comfort for a Cause, started by Page-Maples, to collect items for children with cancer. Each club adopts a senior center and continues working with that center throughout the year. The students at Manassas Park will visit the Caton Merchant House and help with the Be a Santa to a Senior program. The Joe 15 Team provides a consistent group that can form a relationship with



Debbie Page-Maples, chairperson and president of the Joe 15 Team, shares her story with students about why she started the team. Eileen Graham / the Manassas Observer

seniors.

"For as much bad as we've seen with Joe, we've seen so much good. It keeps me going. I like to see people change," she said.

Readers can see who's on the team when students participate in

the Manassas Christmas Day Parade on Dec. 4.

More information on the team is available online at www.thejoe15team.org or by calling 703-895-1606. The Team's headquarters are at 7450 Donset Court in Manassas.