



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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Press Release

Students at DA's winter basketball camp Learn lessons for safe, healthy life

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Three dozen Stoughton students are spending their mornings with District Attorney Michael W. Morrissey and the staff at his winter basketball camp this week, learning lessons in teamwork, community and how to keep themselves and their friends safe and strong.

"It is important that we focus on good kids doing the right things when we can," District Attorney Morrissey said. "The justice system necessarily focuses on those who have gone astray, but it is important that our institutions also pour time and attention into helping good kids stay on the right path."

Morrissey has run basketball camps in Stoughton during February vacation since taking office in 2009, using funds earmarked for crime prevention and community support. "The Stoughton Recreation Department, Police and the schools have been great partners since the beginning."

Morrissey has constructed his basketball camps, which he has also held in Quincy and Randolph, to include a mix of positive messages from community leaders, basketball skills and life skills. Past guests have included Attorney General Maura Healey, herself a former professional basketball player, Sheriff Michael G. Bellotti, Stoughton Police Chief Donna McNamara and Stoughton High School varsity basketball players.

"Today's kids have to navigate dangers that did not even exist when many of us were young," DA Morrissey said. "The lessons of teamwork, planning, communication, helping your friends when they get in a jam – all those skills that apply to basketball also apply to various social pressures and dangers. The pieces fit together."

Tuesday morning started with basketball drills under the direction of Carl Boen, retired coach at Southeastern Regional Vocational Technical High School, and O'Donnell Middle School coach Caitlin Valair. By 10 a.m., the third- through eighth-graders were getting a crash course in fire safety from the Weymouth fire lieutenant who also works part-time overseeing Norfolk County's diversion program for juvenile firesetters

Sheriff Michael G. Bellotti dispatched his mobile fire simulation trailer, set up to look like a normal bedroom but equipped to fill with fake smoke to simulate the visibility problems and dangers of a house fire.

"We intersperse the basketball drills and scrimmages with as many messages about keeping safe and staying on the right path as we think we can get away with without losing the attention of the campers," District Attorney Morrissey said, after joining in a couple of the Tuesday's drills. "If the kids walk away with improved communication, friendships and a feeling of accomplishment, the camp has already done its job."