



For Immediate Release

## Troopers Teaching Students

*A non-profit has Pennsylvania State Troopers teaching 'life skills' to students K-8 to prevent juvenile delinquency and improve community relations with law enforcement*

**Erie, PA (October 7, 2016)** – Every Tuesday afternoon, PA State Trooper Joel Bridges teaches a class of 5<sup>th</sup> graders a lesson on character building at Wayne Public School. This week's topic was 'Integrity'. 'Lesson: Integrity is the doing the right thing when no one is looking.' He's been eagerly spending his time with the non-profit All About Character, Inc. for two years, and sees the program making a positive impact. "[The] program is so gratifying. To be able to work with young students that want to learn about character, is exciting," says Trooper Bridges. "Over time it will make my job that much better."

**All About Character, Inc.** was founded by retired Pennsylvania State Trooper Matt Harris, who has seen incarceration rates rise and community relations with law enforcement decline over his 20 years of service. He decided it was time to act. He created the [Character Be About It](#) program – A unique curriculum based lesson plan focusing on twelve character building traits and life skills - to prepare young adults for a successful future. This non-profit pays for active duty state troopers/law enforcement to teach students in the classroom for 34 weeks or one whole school year, at no cost to the school. "We are thrilled to be able to implement this program in thirteen schools and have a direct impact with thousands of students," Harris says. "This preventative curriculum based program, is changing the way students view law enforcement officers and helping students make better choices, which will help them stay out of the juvenile justice system."

Diane Sutton, Principal of The Wayne Public School in Erie, PA says, "Matt's character program is one that has changed the entire climate of my school. The behaviors and actions of my students are improving daily."

The Character Be About It program has a working collaboration with [Penn State CORE](#) (Community Outreach Research Evaluation). Preliminary reporting has already indicated success in reducing the number of student referrals in schools for disciplinary action. "We are currently in year two of our evaluation," said CORE Research Director Charisse Nixon, Ph.D. "The initial data that we collected is showing decreases in behaviors, which will keep students in class and improve opportunities for learning."

Harris has successfully instituted this program in Northwestern, PA for six years and looks to bring the program to underserved school districts and State police departments all across the country. "Reflecting on my 20 year career in law enforcement has inspired me to give back. I have learned and believe that what is lacking in our young adults



everywhere is positive character. Character education and bullying prevention is needed in schools and is just as important as reading, writing and arithmetic.”

For more information on All About Character, Inc., a complete list of the thirteen (13) participating schools, and how to bring the program your district, visit [characterbeaboutit.org](http://characterbeaboutit.org) , or call PA State Trooper Matt Harris at 814-882-8268.

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The mission of **All About Character, Inc.**, is to develop leadership skills among youth in grades K-8 while reducing drop out and incarceration rates. Through preventative – based educational programs, taught by trained law enforcement officers, important character traits are instilled in select students, improving the overall school environment and the relationship between community and law enforcement.

**Penn State CORE** is a Community Outreach, Research and Evaluation branch of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences on the Behrend College campus in Erie, PA. Their mission is to promote the advancement of healthy youth development and teen pregnancy prevention collaborative initiatives, by providing high quality, innovative, and in-depth research and evaluative services for public and private organizations.