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1. Tell us about your position and the main responsibilities that come with it.

I'm an investigator with the City of Racine Police Department. I have been on the department for 14 years, and as an investigator for the past 8 years. As of right now I'm in the Sensitive Crime Unit. My main responsibilities are to interview suspects, witnesses, and victims as I am doing follow up on the cases I have been assigned to investigate. I then decide what action should be taken, such as finding a case unfounded, an arrest, and/or a referral to human service, and at times just give advice to the family.

2. And what is the Sensitive Crime Unit?

This unit is responsible for investigations involving domestic violence, crimes against children (child abuse and neglect), sexual assaults, interference with child custody matters, missing persons, and other matters of a sensitive nature.

3. How did you become affiliated with Mentor Kenosha & Racine?

I heard about the Mentoring Certificate course that was being offered at UW-Parkside, and that's how I met Crista. I had talked with her about Mentor Kenosha & Racine providing a scholarship for the police department so that I could attend that training. She informed me that United Way of Racine County had granted a fund to support scholarships for local Racine program staff to help build capacity in mentoring programs. Mentor Kenosha & Racine will also be providing on site training to the officers that have signed up to be Mentors.

4. With that new training, what is your primary goal with Mentor Kenosha & Racine and what do you want to see accomplished through your program?

*That training for me was just a blessing. I'm in the process of starting up a mentoring program with the police department called **Cops n' Kids: Police Pals Mentoring Program**. I saw that Mentor Kenosha & Racine was offering a Mentoring certificate program, so for someone who is not affiliated with any mentoring programs this course has helped to give me the knowledge and resources I needed to start the program. I also met **David Power** of the Racine Unified School District at the training, which was a great resource to help me bring the Cops and Kids program to the school district and to help build that relationship right away.*

5. What inspired you to pursue this line of work?

I was sociology major at UW-Parkside, always taking jobs involving children. I've had jobs ranging from being a playground leader to being a nanny, and working in after school daycare programs. I've always wanted to work with kids, and law enforcement is just something I kind of

fell into...and I love it! Glorified social work is what I call it. Obviously the sensitive crime unit was a perfect fit for me because it deals with juveniles on a daily basis. I deal with juvenile on all levels being offenders, victims and witnesses of crimes. I feel that the way police interact with these juveniles can have a great impact on the youth. I always strive to make that interaction a positive one. We can do a lot to help change their situation and their perspectives, and make positive influence in their lives.

6. You talk about the impact you have on the youth. Unfortunately, it's very easy for youth to see the police as an authority figure and something that they fight against. How do you feel that you can take that impact and make it positive, being someone that they want to turn to?

It's always been easy for me to get along with kids, so for me to be in a position where sometimes they don't see you as that positive influence is really bothersome for me. When I sit down with a kid, whether he/she is a victim, offender, or suspect, any advice that I give them is from the heart. I can be friendly and truly care about them, but they don't always see me as a friendly figure. Unfortunately, we don't have programs like DARE and more, we don't have Officer Friendly, and we don't have officers in the school anymore, so they're not getting these positive interactions.

That's what got me started with this program, trying to take that negative stereotype away and make it a positive interaction. That's where I came up with the Cops n' Kids mentoring program. I want the juveniles to see that the officers who are involved with the program want to be there and not that we are made to be there. I want the children and the community to see that the officers do care about them and what is going on in their lives and in the community. I want this program to break down those stereotypes and build those positive relationships.

7. You much less want to be seen as an intimidation factor, and more so a role model.

Exactly! I want them to see we are not the bad guys and it is not us against them. We need to break down those walls and build up the trust and positive interactions.

8. What's your biggest concern with the youth of today and how can mentoring help?

One of the biggest factors is that there isn't always a lot of stability in their lives. A lot of these kids have pressures and worries that we didn't have growing up, and one of the biggest factors that can change a young person's life is that they have a stable adult. So I think it's important to us, police officers or people in the community, to be those stable adults and guide them.

9. What big changes do you want to see in mentoring as a whole?

I guess people need to just find ways in which they can make it work in their own lives. We're all busy, we're all spread ten different ways, but we need to make time and think outside of the box. A lot of the officers thought that they wouldn't have the time, so I went to the police chief, Art Howell, and explained how important a program like this is, and he was willing to work with me. He agreed and saw the great impact a program like this could make in the community. He

helped make this happen. My point is that we need to be creative and think outside of the box, because you can make it happen and find time in your own lives to better your community.

10. What do you hope to see happen within the Racine community over the next few years?

I'd just like to see people step up. I'd like to see more work places to have programs like this saying "let's do this." Let's give our workers permission to take 20-30 minutes, or even an hour 1x a week to go and mentor in the schools." If the Racine police department can find time in their day, I challenge other companies to make time to let their employees do this. This is a town where we work, live send our kids to school in, we need to be invested in the community and the youth living here. If we want the community to continue to grow in positive way we need to invest in our community.

11. What advice can you offer potential mentors?

There was a lot of apprehension in getting people to join from the police department because they had never done anything like this before. I think people need to focus less on what they don't know and more on what they DO know. We're parents, we're coworkers, and our talents are just sitting down and talking with youth. You just need to be a caring person and see the potential in the child and it will all come. It's just being that stable person that the child can count own.