

BADGES FOR BASEBALL PODCAST SERIES

TOPIC: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Q: What is your name?

A: Officer Michael Scott

Q: What agency do you work for and where is it located? What is your position?

A: I work for the Los Angeles Police Department in Los Angeles, California. My position is, Police Officer-III, in the Community Safety Partnership Unit.

Q: How long have you been in law enforcement?

A: I've been in law enforcement for 22 years.

Q: What influenced you to go into the law enforcement profession?

A: I was seeking an exciting, rewarding and challenging profession, where I could positively impact my community.

Q: What is the Los Angeles Police Baseball Foundation (LAPBF)? What were the steps to get it approved? Did you have support from your department?

A: The Los Angeles Police Baseball Foundation is made up of sworn police officers, who play baseball and are dedicated to bringing police officers, youth, and the community together through America's favorite pastime. We promote healthy lifestyles, physical fitness, and teamwork amongst our youth, while helping create gang-free, drug-free, and crime-free communities. To create the LABF, we hired a nonprofit professional to prepare the proper paperwork and pull together a history of our charity work. My department has shown 100% support throughout the years and is very invested in our mission.

Q: What inspired you to create the LAPBF? Why was this important to you? How did you get buy-in from the community?

A: Seeing how all my past charitable events and activities positively impacted youth and the communities in which we serve with not much financial and in-kind support. By providing free community events, I saw first hand how our interaction with youth and their families instantly changed and became more positive. To get buy-in, we began providing the community with additional police resources, music events, and giveaways to create excitement about our community events.



Q: Do you have any advice for other officers that are interested in starting a similar foundation?

A: Create your foundation from the heart. I would say to set short term and long term goals. Realize that things won't change overnight and that you have to work to build a relationship with the community. It's important to seek partnerships with people and organizations that have the same and/or similar goals as yours.

Q: What was your view about the relationship between youth and law enforcement in your community before you started the foundation?

A: It was good, but there was room for improvement. I felt we needed to do more to let the youth and community know we were there for them and that we would work to gain their trust.

Q: Why do you feel it's important to have law enforcement led experiences to engage youth in the community?

A: Throughout my childhood, I had both positive and negative relationships with law enforcement. As a result of those experiences, I wanted to provide the youth in my community with positive memories of law enforcement in order to help them build trust and respect for officers.

Q: How did the *Badges for Baseball* program provide a new avenue for your officers to engage with youth in your community?

A: The materials and program mirrors the activities we have been using for years. The adaptable materials and financial support is what we were lacking to take our events to a higher level and reach more kids in at-risk communities.

Q: How were you engaging youth prior to the *Badges for Baseball* program?

A: Prior to *Badges for Baseball*, we had a summer event called the Swing-A-Thon. This event brought kids together every summer with baseball clinics, public safety displays, interactive activities, games, music, contests, giveaways, sports celebrity guests, and an LAPD vs. LA Sheriffs rivalry game. We also created an anti-drug, gang, crime, and bullying program in the schools to provide youth with character building skills.

Q: What types of events do you host for the youth in your community?

A: We host baseball clinics, toy giveaways, seasonal giveaways, school rallies, and food and school supply giveaways.

Q: Where do you host your events in your community?

A: We host our events at local community parks, schools, and the communities our kids live in.



Q: Outside of the *Badges for Baseball* program and your special events, how else do you positively interact with youth and the community? Do you only engage youth, or do you try and get your entire community involved in your events? If you engage your whole community, how did you garner excitement and interest from them?

A: Engaging with the community is part of my job description as a Community Safety Partnership Officer. When we're out in the community, we stop and speak with all community members to build trust and relationships with the youth and their parents. Often times, we'll also join the kids when they're playing pick-up games in their neighborhood. We show the community and youth that we truly care. We also always carry sports equipment and other giveaways in our police vehicles to distribute to kids in the community.

Q: What are some challenges you've faced in relation to getting youth involved in your events?

A: Some of the youth in the community are involved in gangs and attempt to influence other kids to participate in delinquent activities. There is also a decent amount of bullying when it comes to youth being shamed for speaking with and engaging with the police. Also, the community has a long standing distrust of police officers that we are working to improve.

Q: How did you get other officers to volunteer in these events?

A: It came naturally, as they witnessed how positively our programs impacts youth, they wanted to get involved. We also have recruited officers through news footage and newspaper articles on how effective our events are.

Q: What has been the response from your fellow law enforcement officers about the events?

A: My fellow officers have enjoyed the interactive experiences, and many have promoted our programs at their own children's schools, which is personally rewarding to them as well.

