

# BADGES FOR BASEBALL PODCAST SERIES

## TOPIC: KEEPING YOUR PROGRAMS RELEVANT

**Q: What is your name?**

A: Corporal Kurt Schnitzenbaumer

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

A: Prince George's County Police Department, the Community Services Division. I'm the Executive Director, Prince George's County Police Athletic League, Inc.

**Q: How long have you been in law enforcement?**

A: 18 years

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

A: I have always had the mindset to help and teach others. Before becoming a police officer, I was going to school to become a teacher. I have always wanted to work with youth and mentor them to be the best person that they can be. I changed paths while in school and I decided to go into law enforcement hoping that I would be able to bring that same mindset of helping others into this profession. I worked on the road for several years before really finding my niche, working in the Community Services Division, where I am able to connect with community leaders, business owners, citizens and youth in a positive environment. This position enabled me to really focus on what was important to me, mentoring and working with the at-risk and under-served youth in Prince George's County, MD. I founded the Prince George's County Police Athletic League, Inc. in 2016 where we now work with over 800 youth each year through various mentoring and athletic programs as well as several summer camps.

**Q: What was your reasoning for making the full transition to the Police Athletic League (PAL)?**

A: I immersed myself into the Prince George's County Police Athletic League because I wanted to provide a safe and positive environment for youth to interact and learn from law enforcement officers. Especially in today's policing climate, it is so important to provide a safe environment for youth to have meaningful conversations and interactions with law enforcement. Many of the youth we work with have had negative interactions with law enforcement or have grown up being taught to avoid the police or that the police are the enemy. PAL has provided an amazing platform for youth to ask us those tough questions, and to see us as human beings outside of the uniform and badge. We engage with youth without our uniforms to help break down those barriers and then we also interact with them in uniform so they can see we are the same with or without the badge and uniform.



**Q: It's our understanding that you have passed up several promotions. If true, can you explain why you chose to do this?**

**A:** Yes, I have voluntarily forgone promotions for the past 10 years in order to remain in my current position as the Executive Director for the Prince George's County Police Athletic League. As a police corporal, I have the ability to remain within my position, if I were to take the Sergeant's test and promote, I would most likely be transferred out of this position and I will not be able to continue the work that I have started. For me, working with the youth and giving back to the community is a calling. I feel it is important that I continue to build PAL and to continue mentoring and working with the youth of Prince George's County. I feel I can make the biggest positive impact within the police department and county by continuing the work I started. I have four years until I am eligible to retire and I have no intentions of promoting out of my current position.

**Q: What are the dynamics between PAL and Prince George's County Police Department?**

**A:** The driving force behind the momentum and growth of the Prince George's County Police Athletic League (PAL) is the relationship and support of the Prince George's County Police Department. The Prince George's County Police Department (PGPD) has an entire unit, the Community Services Division (CSD), dedicated to run and coordinate all community policing efforts in Prince George's County, to include all of the PAL youth programs. The relationship between PAL and the PGPD has been instrumental in securing grants and funding needed to operate PAL. PAL receives County Council grants and private business donations, many of those donations being secured because of PAL's relationship with the police department.

**Q: What type of support do you receive from your department?**

**A:** The police department provides support to PAL in many forms. The officers assigned to CSD, where I am currently assigned, fill many roles within PAL; Executive Director of PAL (My position), program coordinators, program administrator, mentors and program liaisons. We foster many relationships with outside organizations to help us run programs that the police department is unable to run due to expertise and or facility space. Every program has a Prince George's County Police Officer assigned as a program coordinator to assist in all logistical aspects of that program. The police department allows us to use one of their facilities to run our programs as well. We have been given priority use of the gymnasium at our former Police Headquarters. This is an active police facility where we can bring the youth to host mentor sessions, basketball practices, fitness programs and so much more.

**Q: How long have you been a partner of the Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation?**

**A:** The Prince George's County Police Athletic League has been a partner of the Cal Ripken Sr. Foundation for 9 years. In 2012, the Prince George's County Police Athletic began running the *Badges for Baseball* program. In the past 9 years, we have expanded our partnership to include summer camps, college visits, sporting events and so much more.



**Q: What programs do you run? This can include programs through the Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation as well as additional ones.**

**A:** The Prince George's County PAL runs many different programs to include: *Badges for Baseball*, *Badges for Baseball* Summer Baseball Camp, Leadership and Life Summer Camp, Skills & Drills summer camp, basketball, tennis, martial arts, run club, T-TAC (Talk to a Cop), National Police Athletic/Activities League mentoring program, Character Does Matter mentoring program (Travis Manion Foundation), boxing and the Northern Gateway Soccer Club.

**Q: The focus of this questionnaire is to highlight how you keep youth interested in your programs by keeping them relevant and exciting. With that being said, how many different types of sports do you offer? Can you give some examples?**

**A:** Within our programs we offer many different sports. We currently have a PAL Basketball Club, PAL Tennis Club, PAL Martial Arts Club, PAL Boxing Club, PAL Soccer Club and the PAL Run Club. PAL also includes physical activity into each of its' mentoring programs. We love to play dodgeball, knockout, Quickball, kickball and so much more at our mentoring sessions. Soon, we will be introducing a brand-new club, PAL Baseball.

**Q: Do you offer alternative opportunities for participants that might not be interested in sports to have positive interactions with law enforcement officers?**

**A:** Yes, PAL has several engaging mentoring programs where sports is not the focus, We understand that not all youth are interested in playing organized sports so we also introduce different activities to keep everyone engaged. Some of those activities include art projects and board game events. We are currently looking into new ways to engage youth through virtual programming to keep youth engaged and active.

**Q: How do you keep the same youth interested in your program year after year? Do you provide incentives for youth? How do you make it easy for parents to get youth to your programs?**

**A:** I think the biggest reason youth keep coming back to our programs year after year are the officers and volunteers we work with. Myself, fellow officers and civilian volunteers have formed amazing relationships with the youth we engage with each week. The main focus of our programs is to mentor our youth, the sports and activities are secondary. We always go back to and focus on our mission; providing a safe and positive environment for youth and law enforcement to interact. Our main goal is to bridge the gap between our most vulnerable and at-risk youth and the law enforcement officers of the Prince George's County Police Department. We also provide some great incentives for the youth who participate in PAL programs, Every year we schedule many different field trips, such as; trips to Washington DC, Six Flags, Bush Gardens, Major League Sporting events, College Day Experiences with the Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation, overnight trips to the Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation's Summer Camps and overnight trips to the National PAL Youth Summit. Our facility is



centrally located in Prince George's County to make it easier for parents to get their kids to our programs. We also target specific communities in Prince George's County and host those programs at a local facility to make transportation to and from the program easier. If we have a few youth who really want to participate in one of our programs but they cannot get transportation to and from the facility, one of our officers will assist by picking up that youth and then bringing them home. Our officers are very dedicated and truly believe in these programs and will go out of their way to make sure each program is successful.

**Q: How do you keep law enforcement and other mentors interested in your program? Do you provide incentives for officers? Do your officers volunteer during their shifts?**

**A:** It is not hard to keep officers interested in our programs. Those participating officers believe they have a responsibility to make a positive impact on the youth in Prince George's County. There is something inside each officer that drives us to mentor and/or coach youth. To make things easier for our officers and volunteers, PAL works to provide everything needed to make things easier for them to run a particular program. Some of the services we provide are; fundraising, online registration, social media promotion, all equipment and material needed for each particular program and grant writing to raise funds needed for each program.

**Q: What does your program look like on a yearly basis? Does your program format change throughout the year to keep youth engaged?**

**A:** Each program we run looks different. Some of our sports programs are seasonal, such as basketball and soccer. Our other programs run through most of the school year, either on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. During the summer, we usually focus on our summer camps and a community service project for our youth in our mentoring programs. In order to keep youth engaged, we will regularly adjust our schedule. For example; on days school is out, we will schedule a field trip or day camp for our youth to attend. Many times, parents still have to go to work on those days and the youth would be left at home. In order to keep the youth engaged and out of trouble, we give them a place to come and have fun in a safe environment.

**Q: Do you provide other opportunities for youth to positively engage with law enforcement, such as field trips or other special events?**

**A:** Yes, we host several field trips for youth to attend with our law enforcement officers. We feel it is very important for youth to see officers not just as a uniform but as everyday people. We share personal stories with youth and interact with them in ways not typical of a police officer. We are trying to install trust between our youth and law enforcement officers. We also like to bring in specialty units from our police department to interact and show youth the many different aspects of law enforcement. Some of these include our K9 unit, aviation unit, tactical units, evidence unit and our investigators.

