



# D.A.R.E.

## D.A.R.E. Officer Jerry Smith

Cedar Lake Police Department



“ Being given the opportunity to serve the children of my community as their D.A.R.E. officer has been one of my life’s greatest accomplishments. ”

**D.A.R.E. Indiana:** Why did you decide to become a D.A.R.E. Officer?

**D.A.R.E. Officer Smith:** Prior to January 2000, I did not believe that D.A.R.E. made or could make a difference. It took one catastrophic life changing event to change my outlook. On January 24, 2000, I was seriously injured in a motor vehicle accident while in route to a 911 call. That accident put me in a coma for 13 days and ICU for more than 2 months. I was told I would never again be a police officer. I never once believed that. The one thing that made the biggest difference to my speedy recovery were boxes of Get Well wishes from elementary students across the Northern Region of IN. Children that I had never met and most likely never would have met in my career or lifetime provided me with hundreds of well wishes for my recovery. They, the children, made the difference in my life, so becoming a D.A.R.E. Officer was a way for me to give back by making a difference in the lives of others. Fifteen years a D.A.R.E. Officer, an Indiana D.A.R.E. Officer of the Year and, now, being Chief of Police are accomplishments that I can only give credit to those children that wrote all of those amazing Get Well cards during my time of need.

**D.A.R.E. Indiana:** Were you a D.A.R.E. student?

**D.A.R.E. Officer Smith:** No, I was not.

**D.A.R.E. Indiana:** How many years have you been a law enforcement officer?

**D.A.R.E. Officer Smith:** 20 years.

**D.A.R.E. Indiana:** How many years have you been a D.A.R.E. Officer?

**D.A.R.E. Officer Smith:** 15 years.

**D.A.R.E. Indiana:** Which D.A.R.E. curriculums do you teach?

**D.A.R.E. Officer Smith:** Elementary and 5-6.

**D.A.R.E. Indiana:** How many students do you teach each year?

**D.A.R.E. Officer Smith:** From 80 to almost 300 students.

**D.A.R.E. Indiana:** What is the most rewarding thing about being a D.A.R.E. Officer?

**D.A.R.E. Officer Smith:** Knowing that you can make a difference.

**D.A.R.E. Indiana:** What are the most important aspects of the curriculum? Why?

**D.A.R.E. Officer Smith:** Team work, acceptance and building self-esteem.

**D.A.R.E. Indiana:** What is your favorite part of the D.A.R.E. program?

**D.A.R.E. Officer Smith:** Role model day, old lessons on advertisement and, of course, graduation.