

Beacon Hill Byline by Mary Rogeness

April 14, 1994

Longmeadow's DARE graduation

Longmeadow's elementary schools had their annual DARE graduation last week. The DARE programs are one of the most upbeat events I participate in, and I was sorry to miss the annual celebration for the first time. I sent a letter to be read to the graduates in which I try to convey some of the excitement of the event. I am reprinting that letter in the Byline to give you an idea of that excitement.

To the graduating DARE class of 1994

I am writing to bring congratulations from the state of Massachusetts for the achievement that you celebrate tonight. You have worked for seventeen long weeks with Officer Kirby or Officer Stankiewitz to learn how to grow to be healthy, drug-resistant young adults.

You have learned how to say No to drugs and alcohol. You have learned how to relieve stress without drugs by using your own personal style. You have learned who you can rely on for your support system. And if I know the Longmeadow DARE officers, you have had a great time learning these lessons.

I don't know if you have thought about it, but your support systems are gathered here tonight to celebrate with each of you. Your parents and family are here. Your teachers, the principal and Superintendent of Schools are all here to show that the school system is on your side.

The DARE officers and the Chief of Police are here to show the support of our police department. Selectman Gerry Nolet is here to show that your town of Longmeadow wants the best for you. Although I cannot be with you, I have written this letter to tell you that the legislature of the whole state is on your side. Remember to call on us for the support we are promising you as you move into middle school and high school.

Tonight you are wearing your new DARE t-shirts for the first time. They tell the world that you are DARE graduates. You are the only ones who can wear those shirts. Your shirts are big enough to see you through school. They are sturdy enough to withstand lots of washings, and I understand that you can even get a replacement if they wear out. Wear your shirts proudly as you continue to Take Your Stand.

Congratulations to you all.

Mary Rogeness