

Beacon Hill Byline by Mary Rogeness

March 27, 1997

### **Longmeadow's DARE graduation**

Longmeadow's elementary students will all have their annual DARE culmination celebrations during these last two weeks of March. St. Mary's The public schools and Heritage Academy are all participants in the program sponsored by the Longmeadow Police Department, so that means there are three celebrations. The DARE programs are an annual I highlight in my schedule, but this I year I'm forced to miss some of the programs. The new DARE graduates will now be showing up around town identified by their brand new DARE T-shirts. They are enthusiastic bearers of the messages they have mastered over a seventeen week course of study. Ask them about DARE when you see them. This is what I will say to the students at Heritage Academy next week.

To the graduating DARE class of 1997:

I am bringing congratulations from the State of Massachusetts for the achievement that you celebrate tonight. You have worked for seventeen long weeks with your DARE officers 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. The Board of Selectmen is represented to show that your town of Longmeadow wants the best for you. And I am here representing the House of Representatives 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.