

[Officer Schoeff]: It really is a different day every day I come in here. And there's a different story that walks in this door. What I really enjoy doing is just sitting down and listening to what the story is, finding out the backstory from the student, and working with the knowledge of that student, the backstory of that student, and helping them be successful moving forward.

Everybody has a story. And the great benefit that I have as a school resource officer is I get to dig into that backstory. I don't have to take the surface issue, and just, "Hey, you made a mistake, this is the consequence." I don't have to do that. I have the opportunity to dig into why.

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[SFX 1]

[SFX 2]

FROM W-H-J-E, THIS IS FIRST RESPONDERS 411, GETTING YOU THE INSIDE SCOOP ON FIRST RESPONDERS IN THE CARMEL AREA.

[SFX 3]

I'M TATUM PRATI

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[SFX 4]

[Tatum]: Officer Schoeff is a school resource officer at CHS. He worked at Carmel Middle School for seven and a half years before coming to the high school. Students talk to him about drugs, alcohol, sexual and physical abuse, and lots of other things.

[Officer Schoeff]: I have a lot of students that will come in and talk with me about a pretty large variety of things from conflicts with staff, conflicts with parents, conflicts with other students. There really is truly a lot of conflict resolution in this. The other thing that I work a lot with is encouraging our students to be self advocates. A lot of times, students will come in, and they'll

have a frustration about a teacher, they'll have a frustration about a parent. But as we sometimes do in human nature, especially as teenagers, we tend to go to other people to complain about that and talk about it instead of figuring out the right avenue to advocate for ourselves and to speak with the individual to resolve the conflict. I don't consider myself in the business of fixing conflicts. I consider myself the idea of trying to help people understand how to work through their conflicts themselves. If I give them those tools now, and if they develop those here at Carmel High School, as adults they have those tools in place, and they have the ability to work through conflicts that they have which we all have.

[Tatum]: One student who talks to Officer Schoeff is Kayla Hauck. She is a senior at CHS and has known Officer Schoeff since sixth grade. She became close with him in eighth grade when she went to him with a personal problem.

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[Kayla Hauck]: I don't have a good relationship with my father. And I had recently just gotten in a really big fight with him and had left his house. And I had a couple questions. He kind of just dove deep into problems that I really hadn't really thought about me. He kinda started to be a mentor for me and just kinda made me realize people are out there, people love me. He's someone that I can always talk to. And that's really awesome. And that's probably, when I first realized he's not just a cop, he's more than just a cop. These problems with my family continued freshman and sophomore year. And he actually came over to the high school and would talk to me during SRTs or something like that. One of the times that he came over to talk to me, I had gotten a call from my dad or something like that in rehab 'cause his therapist wanted a letter from me about how his addiction to gambling has affected me and my life. And so Officer Schoeff kind of helped me write that which it was a really hard thing for me to do.

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[Officer Schoeff]: I've had many of those experiences where people have come in, and I've learned of very tragic things that have happened in their lives. It breaks my heart when those things happen because I really do care about the success of our students. And there is no greater form of law enforcement in my opinion is the positive impact that we can make on students. And you all kind of become a bit of my own kids and my own passion in working in this role. So when something is hurting inside one of our students and there's a really tragic situation going on, it's important to me that we work through that, we figure out the right way to handle it, so we can help that individual be successful.

[Tatum]: When Officer Schoeff was in high school, there was a police officer who he never wanted to disappoint. Officer Schoeff hopes that students at CHS feel the same way about him. He wants them to feel comfortable talking to him, and he wants to help them overcome challenges.

[Kayla Hauck]: Once I started thinking about colleges I wanted to go to, I kinda really started to freak out. And I would just go to his office and be a complete mess. And he would just build me back up and make me realize how irrational I was being. And then senior year, he's helped me. Over the summer, I got in trouble, made a mistake. He was the first person I contacted. I was like, "I just need you. I feel like I've hit rock bottom. I need you." And he was there. And I met with him over the summer, and we talked. I mean, he's just always wanting to see me succeed and always just been that person that I feel like I can go to.

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[Officer Schoeff]: I'm in this role, and I have a lot of experience as a child and as an adult with blended families. I grew up in a divorced family. So a lot of times kids will come in here and talk

to me. I have the opportunity to work with that because of my experiences myself in my own life. And I take that and work with them just like what I want is any tragedies, any traumas is what we call it, any trauma that you experience in your life as a teenager, as an adult what I'd like for students to understand is that is trauma now, and that is a factor, and that's impacting you, and we have the ability to work through that with the appropriate channels. And then at some point in time, you'll be able to take that and make a positive difference in someone else's life because of the experiences you've had in your life.

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[Officer Schoeff]: Relationships is the key to this job. It's so hard for me even to say that this is a job to be honest with you. My dad always used to tell me, "If you love what you do, you'll never work a day in your life." And not once do I feel like I'm walking in here working. And part of that is just the joy that I see in the students that we have in these hallways. I truly genuinely love walking through the hallways, and seeing the smiles, and getting the high fives and the handshakes and the fist bumps. Just seeing people grow, seeing people overcome challenges that they're having. And then quite frankly hearing from them later on down the road. I've been doing this just long enough. There's several students that I still keep in contact with. Some of those individuals I worked with when they were in sixth and seventh grade at the middle school. And then seeing them progress into being where they are today is just so fantastic to see that success.

[Tatum]: This has been Tatum Prati for WHJE. More stories like this can be found at whje.com.

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