



PRESS RELEASE

Tracey H. Lewis, Ed.D.
Director of Communications
P.O. Box 364
Dobson, North Carolina 27017
336/386-8211 Cell: 336/401-1873
Fax: 336/386-4756
E-Mail: lewist@surry.k12.nc.us

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School Resource Officers Help Promote Positive and Safe Learning Environments

Surry County Schools, in partnership with the Surry County Sheriff's Office, is pleased to welcome three new School Resource Officers, one of which is the addition of a School Resource Officer (SRO) position to support all 11 elementary schools and a new position, Sergeant of SRO Division, bringing the total number of SROs assigned to Surry County Schools up to 10, including DARE Officer Eric Latza.

Officer Jessica Richardson will support the 11 elementary schools. Officer Richardson has nine years of experience at the Surry County Sheriff's Office in the Detention, Patrol, and Civil Divisions. "I wanted the opportunity to be a positive role model and give the individuals I interact with to have a positive view of law enforcement," stated Richardson.

Other new SROs are Officer Jimmie Johnson and Officer Justin Jones. Officer Johnson has 3 ½ years of experience in the Detention Division and holds the Basic Law Enforcement Training Certificate and Basic Detention Certificate. He was the direct care supervisor at the Children's Center of Surry for four years, which involved cooking meals, helping with homework, assisting in free time activities and field trips, as well as providing transportation to school and home in the evenings. Officer Johnson was also the educational liaison for the out of school educational program at the Children's Center for one year where he taught lessons and helped students pass their classes. Additionally, Officer Johnson served at Old Vineyards for two years, in adolescent inpatient psychiatry for male youth aged 12-17, specializing in verbal de-escalation, conflict resolution, and promotion of positive coping mechanisms for a total of seven years working with at-risk and behaviorally challenged youth.

Officer Justin Jones has 9 ½ years of experience at the Courthouse, Detention, and Patrol Divisions. He holds Basic Law Enforcement Training, Detention Certification, and NC Gang Certification.

Sgt. Chad Hutchens will serve as the Sergeant for the SRO division. Sgt. Hutchens is a veteran SRO with 22 years in law enforcement and 15 years as an SRO. He most recently served as the SRO at Meadowview Magnet Middle School. Hutchens holds an Advanced Law Enforcement Certificate and

a Master of Science in Criminal Justice: Public Administration. Sgt. Hutchens shared, “I believe in community policing and have a passion for public service.” Hutchens, an Eagle Scout, has 27 total years in public service including Rescue and EMS and received the National Jefferson Award, a prestigious national recognition honoring community and public volunteerism in America. Sgt. Hutchens further commented, “I am excited we now have 10 SROs including the DARE Officer. I am also excited about the vast experience we have on the team and a dedicated supervisor to support the SROs in their work because school safety is the top priority.”

SROs are “career law enforcement officers, with sworn authority, deployed in community-oriented policing, assigned by the employing Sheriff’s Office to work in collaboration with schools (National Association of School Resource Officers). Historically, SROs first entered North Carolina schools in Forsyth County in 1974 and were initiated by the Surry County Sheriff’s Office in 1996. The role of the SRO is to support the educational mission as a “law-enforcement officer, law-related counselor, and law-related teacher,” according to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.

“I am so appreciative of our County Commissioners allocating the funding for the expansion of an additional SRO to support our elementary schools and the additional sergeant position. Safety is the number one priority for Surry County Schools and the Surry County Sheriff’s Office. SROs promote positive and safe learning environments through the establishment of relationships with school administrators, teachers, parents, and students by being accessible and visible in the schools,” shared Dr. Travis L. Reeves, Superintendent of Surry County Schools.

Sheriff Steve C. Hiatt stated, “The whole idea of the SRO program is to have that positive interaction between the deputies and the school’s students, faculty and parents. As sheriff, public/school safety is the number one priority and I’m excited that the alliance among the Surry County Board of Commissioners, Surry County Board of Education and the Surry County Sheriff’s Office remains strong.”

District-Wide

Sergeant School Resource Officer Division:

Officer Chad Hutchens

DARE Officer:

Officer Eric Latza

Elementary Schools:

Officer Jessica Richardson

Middle Schools

Central Middle:

Officer Steve Boone

Gentry Middle:

Officer Travis Sechrist

Meadowview Magnet Middle:

Officer Jimmie Johnson

Pilot Mountain Middle:

Officer Dierik Freed

High Schools

East Surry High:

Officer Gerald LeFevre

North Surry High:

Officer Delinda Kyle

Surry Central High:

Officer Justin Jones

Pictured on the front row: Officers Richardson, Latza, and Kyles

Pictured on the middle row: Officers Johnson, Boone, Sechrist, and Jones

Pictured on the back row: Officers LeFevre, Freed, and Hutchens

