



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2025.** Please include this submission form as the first page of your electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Prince William County

Program Title: Junior Police Leadership Academy

Program Category: Criminal Justice & Public Safety

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Christopher Shorter

Title: County Executive

Signature: 

Virginia Association of Counties (VACo)
2025 Achievement Awards
Nomination Narrative

Nominee: Prince William County Police Department

Project: Junior Police Leadership Academy

Program Category: Criminal Justice & Public Safety

Situation:

Prince William County is a community known for its diversity and growing population, which includes a significant number of students attending Title I elementary schools. These schools often face challenges, such as limited resources, high rates of economic disadvantage, and the need for additional educational support. Additionally, the Prince William County Police Department recognized that it lacked connection with elementary-aged children. School Resource Officers (SRO) are assigned to middle and high schools and offer the Junior Cadet Program that caters to high school-aged students. But the SROs wanted a way to connect with younger students. In response, the Police Department partnered with Prince William County Schools (PWCS) and created the Junior Police Leadership Academy (JPA) to provide a supportive, enriching experience for these young students. By offering this program, the Police Department seeks to build positive relationships with the community while also offering youth the opportunity to engage with law enforcement officers as mentors.

The primary challenge faced by the program is ensuring that it is accessible to students who may otherwise be excluded from extracurricular activities due to financial constraints or logistical barriers. Additionally, there is a growing need to foster trust and mutual respect between young people and law enforcement, especially in underrepresented communities. Addressing these challenges, the JPA has worked diligently to create an inclusive environment that highlights core values of good character, aiming to bridge gaps in understanding and build trust.

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Nomination Narrative

Program: Prince William County Police Department Junior Police Leadership Academy

Program Description:

The JPA stands apart from other programs by its comprehensive approach to character development. Unlike typical law enforcement programs focused on technical skills, the JPA emphasizes teaching students the seven pillars of good character:

1. **Justice:** Encouraging fairness and the rule of law in their actions and decisions.
2. **Diligence:** Promoting hard work and perseverance in all tasks.
3. **Courage:** Teaching students to stand up for what is right, even in the face of adversity.
4. **Generosity:** Instilling a spirit of giving back to the community and helping others in need.
5. **Integrity:** Fostering honesty, responsibility, and strong moral principles.
6. **Enthusiasm:** Cultivating passion for learning and a positive attitude toward challenges.
7. **Wisdom:** Developing critical thinking, sound judgment, and the ability to make well-informed decisions.

Through a mix of classroom instruction, hands-on activities, and interaction with police officers, the program helps young participants understand the importance of these values, not only within law enforcement but also as they apply to everyday life. The JPA also includes sessions on community safety, teamwork, leadership skills, and conflict resolution, offering a well-rounded approach to personal growth.

The program's accessibility is key to its success. With funding from the Police Department, community partnerships for food donations, and the donation of building space from PWCS, the JPA ensures that there are no financial barriers for students to participate. Transportation, meals, and materials are provided at no cost to families, ensuring that the program is open to all students.

The JPA began in June 2022 and was offered to students at one Title I elementary school. Since then, the program has grown and is now offered to rising 5th graders at three PWCS Title I elementary schools. The program is precipitated by SROs engaging fourth-grade students throughout the school year using weekly activities. This ongoing involvement helps build trust and familiarity between students and officers. Towards the end of the school

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year, SROs introduce the JPA to students, and work closely with both students and parents on the application process for those interested in participating. Students must apply for the program. The academy runs for a week in June at Charles J. Colgan Senior High School. Participants graduate from the program at its conclusion during a ceremony that is attended by the students' families, the Chief of Police, and PWCS leadership.

Results/Success of the Program:

The results of the JPA have been striking, both in terms of the students who participate and the community at large. Feedback from parents, teachers, and the students themselves highlights the positive impact the program has had on participants' attitudes toward law enforcement, school engagement, and overall character development.

- **Increased Trust in Law Enforcement:** Through positive interactions with police officers, students have developed a greater respect for law enforcement and a deeper understanding of their role in the community. This trust-building aspect is critical in fostering lasting relationships between young people and law enforcement.
- **Improved School Engagement:** Students who have participated in the program show greater enthusiasm for school, with many reporting a newfound sense of responsibility and purpose. The JPA has created a positive outlet for students to engage with their community and their education, leading to improved behavior and academic performance.
- **Strengthened Character Development:** By teaching the seven pillars of good character, the program has helped students internalize values that will serve them well throughout their lives. These values have been integrated into their schoolwork, interactions with peers, and decision-making processes.
- **Community Impact:** The JPA has fostered stronger relationships between law enforcement and the community, with both students and their families gaining a deeper appreciation for the work of law enforcement. The program's positive influence has also inspired younger siblings of past attendees to enroll, motivated by what they saw their older brothers and sisters accomplish. In addition, two former JPA

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participants are applying for the Junior Cadet program this year, demonstrating the lasting impact of the academy on youth development and future career interest. Additionally, the program has contributed to greater civic awareness and responsibility among young participants, who are more likely to engage in community service and leadership opportunities.

In sum, the Prince William County Police JPA is not only an impactful youth development program, but it also serves as a model for how law enforcement can positively influence future generations, especially those from underrepresented communities. Through its emphasis on good character, leadership, and community engagement, the program is making a significant difference in the lives of the students it serves and the broader community.

Conclusion:

The Prince William County Police Junior Police Leadership Academy deserves recognition for its outstanding contribution to youth development, community relations, and the promotion of positive values. Its innovative approach, with a focus on the seven pillars of good character, provides an invaluable resource to Title I elementary school students and sets a strong foundation for them to become responsible, engaged citizens. The program's success is a testament to the commitment of the Prince William County Police Department and its dedication to creating a safer, more united community for all.

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Abstract/Executive Summary:

The Prince William County Police Junior Police Leadership Academy (JPA) is a transformative community-based initiative aimed at empowering youth and fostering positive relationships between law enforcement and the communities they serve. Targeted specifically at rising 5th grade students at Title I elementary schools, the program strives to instill a sense of responsibility, leadership, and civic duty among the next generation. The JPA teaches participants the seven pillars of good character—Justice, Diligence, Courage, Generosity, Integrity, Enthusiasm, and Wisdom—creating a holistic approach to youth development that goes beyond traditional police training programs. This unique focus on character-building, combined with its emphasis on service to others, differentiates the program from others in the region and positions it as a key vehicle for shaping the leaders of tomorrow.