



Waco officer spreading the word that "tippin' ain't snitchin"

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The last straw was a preschooler wearing a "Stop Snitchin' " T-shirt.

Waco Crime Stoppers Coordinator Steve Dieterich was working out at a local YMCA when he saw the toddler run by.

He encounters it all the time, he said. When he explains Crime Stoppers to children or adults, they bring up snitches.

But at the gym that day, Dieterich thought to himself, "How can I get across tippin' ain't snitchin' ?"

Bingo.

Crime Stoppers' newest awareness campaign was born.

Dieterich regularly talks to students about Crime Stoppers, and he said he hears the same things.

"Inevitably, someone will say, 'That's a snitch program,' or, 'I'm not a snitch,' " he said.

"To me, a snitch is someone who has been caught and is willing to turn someone in to save their own skin," Dieterich said. "I say to them, 'What if somebody attacked your grandmother?' I say, 'Wouldn't you want someone to tell the police what happened?' They say, 'Well, yeah, I guess.' "

"You have to bring it home," he said.

On Thursday, Dieterich spoke to a University High School class about the new campaign.

"This 'Stop Snitchin' ' is just propaganda put out by the criminal world," Dieterich said. "Anyone who knows criminals knows they'll dime each other out in a minute if it'll help them out. The criminal world wants to put

that in your head because they don't want you telling on them, even though they tell on each other all the time."

The "Stop Snitchin' " campaign started through songs by rap artists Skinny Suge, the Diplomats and Cam'ron telling people to stop talking to police.

Soon, T-shirts, many with a stop sign and the words "Stop Snitchin' ," became popular billboards for the campaign.

Dieterich says he's trying to combat that way of thinking.

He may be on the right track.

At UHS, Dieterich held up the list of Waco's most wanted criminals, now up to 18, instead of the usual 10.

From the front of the room, someone said "Mantekas."

Some of the students started talking, and one teenager held up a dog tag with a picture of Jerardo Hernandez, a University High School student, known as Mantekas, who was shot to death during a party July 1.

The students had spotted a picture of the man wanted in Jerardo's killing, Jesus Urquiza.

It was an unexpected connection, but Dieterich's message took on a personal feel for the students, many of whom had played soccer with Jerardo.

"You need to tell, if it's the right thing to do," said UHS student Mark Uvalle, 19. "I'd do it. I don't care what other people think about me, but it's hard for other kids."

He added, "I think they would, because in the back of their head, they know it's the right thing, but sometimes I think they choose not to, because they're afraid they'd be called a snitch."

Dieterich hopes his new slogan will help more kids see the difference.

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