

**D.A.R.E. Graduation
June 6, 2009**

Good morning everyone. I am again happy and excited to be part of this very important event. I want to thank the Board of Education and the school administration for inviting the Township Committee today.

I particularly want to commend Detective Mike Mitchell for his many years of service to the children as their mentor of this crucial program. And of course, I want to congratulate all of the students for their successful completion of the DARE program.

Since 1983, DARE officers like Mike Mitchell have been educating our children and providing them with the skills to resist the temptation and peer pressure of drugs, gangs and violence. In the past three years, over 220 schools have started a new DARE program, which now amounts to 75% participation in our nation's schools. DARE education is probably as important as any regular course we teach our children, maybe more.

It is critical that we as parents, educators and community leaders do all that we can to lead our children on the right path so that they can achieve their life's goals. And that is why we are here today. That is why we continue to offer DARE to every one of our students.

So as your names are announced, I want all of you kids to remember that today's graduation is just as important as when you move on to graduate to Junior High and graduate from Barnegat High School.

As your Mayor and on behalf of the entire Barnegat Township Committee, congratulations and enjoy your summer!

**Jeffrey M. Melchiondo
Mayor, Barnegat Township.**