



Sheriff J. Al Cannon, Jr., County of Charleston, South Carolina

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**Charleston County Sheriff's Office launches "Project WeBelieve" A
Community Policing Based Initiative**

(Charleston County, SC) As a component of the Charleston County Sheriff's Office *WeBelieve* Community Policing Project, the Sheriff's Office Community Affairs has developed several community based programs. One of the first programs developed is called, "*Lunch with Deputies*" a youth mentoring program.

The main goal of this program is to promote positive interactions between deputies of the Charleston County Sheriff's Office and students from local elementary and middle schools by simply having "lunch" and engaging the kids in positive conversation. Each month, deputies from the Charleston County Sheriff's Office, with approval from the school's principal, will attend a preselected school during lunch times and spend quality time interacting with the kids.

The Charleston County Sheriff's Office in its continued effort in building a bridge of sustainable trust between law enforcement and the community established this youth mentoring program to bring Sheriff's deputies and students in the Charleston County School System together help foster a positive relationship and environment. The aim of the "Lunch with Deputies" Program is to build positive relationships between the youth and law enforcement officers in an attempt to provide these adolescents with support and guidance.

The positive influences of forming a program of this nature is building a trusting and lasting relationship with a law enforcement officer and kids with the intended purpose of helping kids, while at a young age, consider the consequences of their actions and to encourage them to always stride to make good decisions throughout their lives. The program will include monthly lunch sessions within the school where the relationship between the students and deputies will continue to develop. Our "*lunch with deputies*" program will start on March 9, 2016 at E.B. Ellington Elementary School and will expand to several other schools in the rural areas of Charleston County in the near future.

The Charleston County Sheriff's Office has partnered the Town of Hollywood, Charleston County School District, Charleston County Government, and Riley Fellows from the Riley Institute.