

# Police officer supporting his community with kindness



[Jay Jefferson Cooke](#), May 28, 2016

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Plainfield cop gives kids tools for success .



I recently wrote a news story about a Plainfield organization that is seeking volunteers and aid in continuing to provide positive, healthy and uplifting activities to youth and family members in the city.

I know that there are a number of people and organizations working for the positive development of Plainfield. I wish nothing but the best for the Queen City. My first

experience with Plainfield was as a very young child.



*Bernal Harrison, front row wearing a black shirt, with students who have received donations of athletic footwear. Harrison is middle school resource officer in the Plainfield Police Division. (Photo: ~Courtesy of Plainfield Public Schools District)*

In 1973, I began attending summer camp in Wernersville, Pennsylvania, at the YMCA property Camp Conrad Weiser. (Ooh, I can sneak a history lesson in here!) Conrad Weiser (November 2, 1696 – July 13, 1760), born Johann Conrad Weiser Jr., was a Pennsylvania German (Pennsylvania Dutch) pioneer, interpreter and diplomat between the Pennsylvania Colony and Native Americans. This camp emphasized Native American culture and offered many activities in a DIVERSE environment.

Although I come from what a major news magazine once called in a cover story the most integrated neighborhood in America, I was happy then and now to attend sleepaway camp

as well with people from every background imaginable and from every corner of the world. Conrad

Weiser had campers and counselors of many backgrounds from Africa, Europe, Asia, Australia and every single state.

My early years in camp, I met a boy named Andre who was from Plainfield. I knew New Jersey, but as Philly kid, I knew South Jersey. Andre, who was the best tetherball (my favorite camp game) player in our village (we were Pioneers, one of the three “younger” villages at the time), explained to me that where he lived in Jersey was close to New York. I never thought about Plainfield again until a dear friend of mine moved there in the early 1990s.

I got my first taste of Plainfield when I moved to Central Jersey from Nashville, Tennessee, in 1994.

I like Plainfield. It is a breath of fresh air in an area that desperately needs a REAL city. City kids love the city. City kids recognize a REAL city. And city kids look to preserve and develop a REAL city so that you can get something more than a prefab, cookie-cutter life experience.

Of course, any REAL city is going to have problems: crime, poverty, violence and social issues will be prevalent at all times.

Fortunately, good people work to develop good and positive things for their community. I recently found out about a man who is going above and beyond the call of duty to help his community, the City of Plainfield.

Bernel Harrison, is middle school resource officer who is part of the Plainfield Police Division. He has been a police officer for 15 years. Every year for the past five years, he has been giving (out of his own pocket) running shoes (spikes) to the track-and-field students. In the past week or so, he has given away several dozen pair of athletic shoes.

I applaud this man and his effort.

Many would not understand the feelings of joy and pride that a pair of athletic shoes can bring to a tween or teen who otherwise would not be able to afford them. New shoes can give a youth a new outlook on life and a new confidence that can help the youth reach new heights.

I strongly suggest that the public support efforts such as Harrison’s and those of FACE Corp. The more positive things that a youth experiences, the less likely the youth will go down the wrong road.

That is important to all of us. Give this some serious thought, please.