

South Roxana Police outreach program returns from Notre Dame football camp

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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SOUTH ROXANA - Eight students from across the Roxana School District were able to spend four days at a football camp at the University of Notre Dame, thanks to the South Roxana Police Department's outreach program.

The students returned Saturday, June 24, after being instructed by the Notre Dame coaching staff, including head coach Brian Kelly, NFL championship winner Todd Lyght, who is formerly of the St. Louis Rams, and former NFL running back Autrey Denson, who is currently a coach at Notre Dame.

"Due to the support of everyone involved in our program, I was able to take eight students from the Roxana School District who lived in South Roxana, Roxana, East Alton, Rosewood Heights and Edwardsville," South Roxana Police Chief Bob Coles said in a release. "The grades ranged from freshmen to seniors."

Practices during the four days of intensive training lasted from 9:30 a.m. until 9 p.m.

"The students told me it was one of the most difficult practices they have ever been through," Coles said in the release. "By Saturday, I noticed them walking slower and hobbling around. It was definitely something we joked about."

Coles said the trip's focus was to bond with students and show them hard work and dedication leading to something beyond their hometowns.

"I wanted to strip away the image of the uniform and let the students know the person beyond the badge, so we could establish a more meaningful relationship,"he said. "It did not take long before we were all sitting around joking and getting to know each other. I could not have asked for a better time and experience with these young adults. I do not think without this program these bonds would have developed as they did."

The South Roxana Police Department is planning on making the outreach program an annual event with the students and the department.

Many community members assisted with the venture as well, Coles said. Jerry Kane from Madison County Transit (MCT) donated a 15-passenger bus and Mikes Inc. and Jarrett Industries backed the trip financially with the assistance of private individuals who donated \$10-\$2,500 each.