Police officer's class in Mosby Court helps residents land jobs - Richmond Times-Dispatch

Reynaldo Perez, an officer with the Richmond police, volunteers his time to run the Bridging the Gap One Human at a Time program at Mosby Court.

"It's the best thing ever," he said. "Once they tell me that, I've been paid."

Perez, an officer with the Richmond police, volunteers his time to run the Bridging the Gap One Human at a Time program at Mosby Court.

The class is designed to help participants land and keep the job.

Perez said he got the idea after talking to a man he was arresting — again.

"I'm arresting the same people over and over," he said. "It's just building their record, and that's all."

So he asked why the criminal stuck with it. The reply he received was that the man wanted out, but wasn't getting any traction.

He recalled hearing, "If I do 30 to 50 applications and no one hires me, how am I going to feed my family?"

Inspired by the interaction, Perez started his class. And while the inspiration came from an interaction with a criminal, participants don't have to have a record or be from Mosby Court, which is a public housing complex.

Perez gives easy-to-remember, bite-sized pieces of advice to his students: Sit up, speak clearly and confidently, say you'll be able to get to work on time consistently. If you can't find a ride, he reminds them, I'll drive you.

Police Capt. Roger Russell said the program works because of Perez's relationship with the community.

"He really has an (incredible) amount of trust with the people out there," he said.
The class has already paid off for student Jeffrey Perry, 55, of Church Hill, who was recently released after spending 18 years in the state prison system. He was steered to the program by Stacey Kennedy of the city’s social services, he said. Through the class, he got a job with SafeLink Wireless, helping to sign those on government assistance up for free cellphones.

He recalled his reaction to having a job.

“I cried,” he said. “I was overwhelmed, and I thank Perez every day.”

Perez says he’s always looking for more businesses to partner with as he works to place his students. He can be reached at (610) 751-5243.

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"The Horse in Art"
Thu, Nov 19, 7:00 pm EST
The Cultural Arts Center at Glen Allen, Glen Allen

Lisa Landry
Thu, Nov 19, 7:30 pm EST
Funny Bone Comedy Club, Henrico

VCU Dance: "Fall Senior Project"
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VCU Grace Street Theater, Richmond

"Don't Wait Up, "Richmond!" by Will Armstrong
Fri, Nov 20, 6:00 pm EST
Crossroads Art Center, Richmond

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