



# Sharing Ohio's Best Program

Recognizing Outstanding Community Policing



Agency of the Month

## Greenhills Police Department

June 2025

### ***Building Bridges Initiative: Cops and Barbers***

#### ***Summary of Program***

In late 2024, Antonio Spicer, a barber at T Smalls Barbershop, approached the Greenhills Police Department with concerns about the growing distrust of law enforcement among young males in the community. Through his conversations, while cutting hair, he frequently heard sentiments of skepticism and unease toward the police. Wanting to be proactive, Antonio reached out to Chief Jim Howarth to explore ways to foster better relationships between officers and youth.

After several meetings with officers and community stakeholders, the Cops & Barbers: Building Bridges initiative was launched. The program creates a safe, informal space where young men can converse openly and honestly with law enforcement officers. By hosting regular community conversations at barbershops and other community hubs, the initiative promotes mutual understanding, trust, and mentorship.

The inaugural Building Bridges Community Conversation occurred on January 19, 2025, with approximately 20 male youth in attendance (flyer and picture attached). Officers and stakeholders provided pizza and soft drinks and distributed fifteen \$25 gift cards as incentives for participation, thoughtful questions, academic achievements, and engagement. The event was a resounding success, fostering meaningful dialogue and enthusiasm for future gatherings. Attendees were eager to return and committed to bringing friends to the next session.

The next Community Conversation is scheduled for February 23, 2025 (flyer attached), and the initiative aims to expand its reach by engaging more young people, community leaders, and stakeholders. By proactively addressing concerns, breaking down barriers, and promoting positive interactions, the Cops & Barbers: Building Bridges initiative strengthens relationships between law enforcement and the community—one conversation at a time.

#### ***Program Objectives***

The Cops & Barbers initiative is designed to foster trust, understanding, and positive relationships between young male teens and police officers through open dialogue in a supportive and community-driven environment. The program aims to:



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1. Facilitate Honest Conversations – Provide a safe space for young men to engage in meaningful discussions with police officers, allowing them to express concerns, ask challenging questions, and share personal experiences.
2. Build Trust and Understanding – Strengthen relationships between law enforcement and youth by promoting transparency, empathy, and mutual respect, ultimately improving police-community interactions.
3. Empower Youth with Communication Tools – Equip young men with skills to engage in productive and respectful dialogues, helping them navigate interactions with authority figures and within their communities.
4. Promote Positive Role Models – Connect youth with law enforcement officers who serve as mentors, offering guidance, support, and real-life insights into policing and community safety.
5. Enhance Community Safety – Foster collaborative relationships between young people and law enforcement to reduce tensions and misunderstandings and contribute to a safer and more unified community.
6. Expand Outreach and Accessibility – Establish Cops & Barbers sessions in various neighborhoods, including Greenhills, Forest Park, Cincinnati, Springfield Township, and Springdale, ensuring broad participation and sustained community impact.

This initiative leverages barbershops as trusted community spaces where open dialogue can lead to long-term positive change.

## **Expected Results**

1. Improved Police-Youth Relations – Increased trust and mutual respect between young men and law enforcement, leading to more positive interactions in the community.
2. Enhanced Community Safety – A reduction in misunderstandings and tensions between police and youth, contributing to a safer and more cohesive community.
3. Empowered and Informed Youth – Young men will develop better communication skills, gain a clearer understanding of police roles, and feel more confident in engaging with law enforcement.
4. Reduction in Negative Police Perceptions – Open conversations will help dispel misconceptions, reducing fear and distrust while fostering a more balanced perspective on policing.
5. Increased Law Enforcement Awareness – Officers will gain deeper insights into the concerns, challenges, and lived experiences of young people, improving their approach to community policing.
6. Strengthened Community Partnerships – Collaboration between barbershops, schools, local organizations, and police departments will create a network of support for youth development and crime prevention.
7. Sustained Positive Engagement – The initiative will establish ongoing dialogue beyond the program, encouraging continued relationship-building through mentorship and community involvement.
8. Higher Youth Participation in Community Initiatives – Young people will feel more encouraged to engage in civic activities, leadership programs, and constructive community efforts.
9. Reduction in Negative Police Encounters – Increased understanding and trust can lead to fewer confrontational interactions, improving overall community-police relations.



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10. Model for Other Communities – Success in Greenhills and surrounding areas can serve as a blueprint for similar programs in other neighborhoods, fostering broader police-community engagement.

