



He DAREs

Officer Vincent Baiocchetti helps Gilmanton students like Stephanie Bartlett, left, Dan Lasata,

Shawn Partridge and Sheri West learn to say 'No' to drugs.

Gilmanton Fifth Graders Learn To Say 'No' to Drugs, Alcohol

GILMANTON — The 38 fifth graders at Gilmanton Elementary School meet Tuesdays with Officer Vincent Baiocchetti of the local police department. The topic? Saying 'No' to drugs.

Baiocchetti is one of 54 officers in the state trained to teach the D.A.R.E. to Say No to Drugs course in a local school system. Officers must attend 80 rigorous hours of training to qualify to lead the courses.

The 19-week course helps students develop self-esteem, deal with peer pressure, manage internal and external stresses and "just say 'No'" to

drugs, including alcohol.

Using D.A.R.E. the bear and his friend Teddy, students enter role-playing games to reinforce methods to avoid pressure from persistent friends.

At the end of the course, graduation exercises will include some special treats thanks to the Lakes Region Exchange Club which has donated funds to the project. Baiocchetti said students will receive D.A.R.E. T-shirts, graduation cards and teaching aids to remind them of the experience and reinforce the need to stay clear of drugs. A D.A.R.E. fund will also be set up with the donation.

Baiocchetti stays at the school all afternoon. In addition to leading his course, he gets to know the students and their teachers Judy Rogato and Deb Monia. Last week, he helped one class dip candles.

Baiocchetti said he and a Gilford officer teaching fifth graders in that town will ask the permission of their chiefs to follow these students through high school to track the effectiveness of the program.

"It's a long-term education program. It is believed that reducing the demand (of drugs) will eventually reduce the supply," he said.