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Experts in school safety to be featured at second annual Valley View Conference

By Victoria Winters

It's not a question of IF, it's a question of WHEN something will happen in a school building, on school grounds or on board a school bus. Are the schools in this nation prepared? Police and fire personnel, school administrators and safety officials from throughout the Midwest will gather Sept. 23 in Bolingbrook to seek answers to that question and more, and to help each other look to a secure future.

The nationally-acclaimed Valley View School District 365U School Safety Conference will once again feature world-renowned speakers and highly relevant topics focusing on key areas regarding safety measures that need to be implemented in every school district in this country.

Internationally recognized and award winning educator Dr. Stephen Sroka will be the keynote speaker. Dr. Sroka will feature his high-energy, motivational and reality-based presentation "the Power of One" in which he focuses on the whole student and his belief that safe and healthy students live and learn better.

Jeff Chudwin, police chief of Olympia Fields, Recipient of the 2009 Law Officer Trainer of the Year award, will present effective violence prevention and intervention strategies for schools. He will show administrators and law enforcement personnel how to plan and prepare for school incidents.

Attendees will also learn what happens in the aftermath of a crisis, most notably addressing the concerns of students, parents and the community which is critical. Donald Grady, Northern Illinois University police chief, lived through the nightmare of the NIU shootings and will give first-hand accounts on lessons and the challenges in ensuring campus safety.

Plus, using his more than 13 years of first-hand experience working with youth gangs as a researcher, academician, and law enforcement officer, Cliff Akiyama will address the serious safety threat of gangs in schools.

A lunchtime panel discussion will give attendees the opportunity to get direct feedback on specific safety questions from the experts.

Last year's conference drew rave reviews from attendees.

"By far the best one I've been to. Thanks!" said a Chicago suburban School Resource Officer and Rapid Deployment Instructor.

"It is very impressive that Mr. (Leroy) Brown (Safety Coordinator for Valley View School District 365U) took his idea of promoting school safety and produced this amazing conference," said another attendee. "I learned a lot and we took away many ideas we plan to use within our school district."

Conference registration is available online at <http://ssc.vvsd.org>. Early bird registration is \$45 by July 1. After July 1, registration will be \$60. The conference website contains specific details on area hotels, conference sponsors, speakers and directions to the conference venue.