



# CITY OF CLEARWATER

POST OFFICE BOX 4748, CLEARWATER, FLORIDA 33758-4748  
CLEARWATER POLICE DEPARTMENT, 645 PIERCE STREET, CLEARWATER, FLORIDA 33756  
TELEPHONE (727) 562-4242

POLICE DEPARTMENT

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Contact: Elizabeth Watts

Public Safety PIO

[elizabeth.watts@myclearwater.com](mailto:elizabeth.watts@myclearwater.com)

(727) 562-4333

## CREDIT RECOVERY STUDENTS COMPLETE OPERATION GRADUATE

**Clearwater, Fla.** – Credit recovery students completed Operation Graduate, each with his or her own unique success story. Twelve students received certificates of completion yesterday during a ceremony at Clearwater Police Headquarters. The following two success stories highlight the positive impact this program has had on participating students.

- A teenager with a 0.5 GPA missed 118 days of school and was arrested five times between 2010 and 2011. When this teen entered the program he was skeptical and not convinced he was able to graduate. He was encouraged to put the effort forth in credit recovery to get back on track in school. The teen was present every day for Operation Graduate's credit recovery program and earned a half credit for English and is well on the way to completing the second half credit. A half credit is equivalent to half of a normal school year. Since joining the program, the teen has not had additional contact with law enforcement other than mentoring.
- Another teenager never attended a full day of school last year. This teen had a 1.1 GPA and was arrested six times in the past two years. She was also skeptical of the program and was also encouraged to put forth an effort in the program. She has earned one full credit in algebra, making up for two failing grades. Since joining the program, this teen also has not had additional contact with law enforcement other than mentoring.

The credit recovery portion of the program includes juveniles who are currently on probation. Officer Christian Zarra is the coordinator and works with the Department of Juvenile Justice. "This job is more than about making arrests. It's about helping people," said Ofc. Zarra. "We don't want to simply continue arresting these kids. We want to do something to help change their lives." During yesterday's ceremony, several children spoke about how Operation Graduate changed their outlook on life and gave them a second chance and a new dream. Due to confidentiality and public record laws exemptions, no names or photos will be released.





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Operation Graduate seeks to increase the number of youth with on-time graduation, introduce high school students to college and work experiences, help develop life skills and provide students and their families with service referrals and interventions. Partners include the Clearwater Police Department, United Way of Tampa Bay, St. Petersburg College, Clearwater Campus, Pinellas County Schools, Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, Clearwater Parks and Recreation and the Upper Pinellas Ministerial Alliance.

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