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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TAPS Academy Graduates 95 Students from Program Designed to Reduce Social Distance Between Youth and Law Enforcement

The program creates an ongoing open-environment for two traditionally-conflicting groups

HOUSTON – (May 27, 2015) – With recent headlines highlighting community conflict and rising racial tensions, a group of Texas teens and local law enforcement officers prepared to celebrate a newfound system of support built on mutual trust and respect. Ninety-five students from area schools graduated from the Teen and Police Service (TAPS) Academy's spring semester.

The innovative, 11-week program pairs at-risk teens with mentor-officers after each are evaluated on their situational feelings for each other. Over the semester, topics ranged from conflict resolution, drug prevention and the avoidance of gang life to team-building, nutrition and safe driving are discussed and participants learn how to apply TAPS strategies to their lives beyond the Academy program.

Students from La Marque Independent School District's (ISD) Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP); Lee High School; Beechnut Academy; Galveston County Juvenile Center and the Harris County Youth Village participated in the graduation.

"TAPS program changed my life. I really disliked cops before, but now I know what they do, and why they chose to do that job," said 'Chance', an alumni of TAPS Academy. "I look at the police a lot differently now."

'Chance,' as well as other TAPS alumni students are encouraged to carry the information learned in TAPS Academy to lead TAPS Clubs, condensed versions of the academy, at their home schools. This allows them to assume a leadership role while teaching fellow peers key information learned in TAPS Academy.

To date, more than 500 youth have graduated from TAPS Academy. Ohio Dominican University's research of TAPS Academy illustrates its effectiveness with results, including a 39 percent increase in respect for law enforcement, a 39 percent increase in the desire to get along with law enforcement and a 44 percent increase in the respondents who felt closer to the police following the end of the program.

Momentum and enthusiasm for TAPS Academy continue to rise as high schools and juvenile facilities across the nation show an interest in the program. Currently, TAPS has locations in Tampa, Florida; Miami, Florida; Columbus, Ohio; Chicago, Illinois; Ponce, Puerto Rico; and the nation of St. Kitts. In

addition, several cities in Texas including: Houston, El Paso, La Marque and Galveston. The organization plans to expand to Washington, D.C. and Dallas in the fall.

More information about TAPS Academy can be found at TAPSAcademy.org or Facebook.com/TAPSAcademy.

About TAPS Academy

TAPS Academy is an 11-week curriculum based program funded by the Department of Justice, Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Office. TAPS Academy's goal of reducing the social distance between at-risk youth and law enforcement is being accomplished through learning, interaction and discussion between at-risk youth and local law enforcement personnel. Through this program, TAPS students and law enforcement personnel gain valuable insight about each other and the issues they face on a daily basis.

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