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## Riverdale Park District Wins Taste of Thornton Township Basketball Tournament



The third annual Taste of Thornton Township basketball tournament crowned the Riverdale Park District team as champions.

This year the tournament was bigger in several ways. Eight teams participated in the double elimination tournament which was the largest tournament ever. In addition, spectators filled the South Suburban College bleachers. The tournament hosted more than 150 people for the tournament, which combines police, firefighters, employees and teenagers playing on the same team for the pride of their towns. Riverdale Police and Fire Department came in second, while the Harvey Police Department took third.

"This tournament was one of the best for many reasons. The large crowd watching the early game really elevated the enthusiasm and energy in the building," said Ernst Lamothe Jr., township communication manager.

Typically, communities have police officers and kids playing against each other in a basketball tournament. However, Thornton Township officials decided combined teams made more sense.

"The way you make a community stronger is working together, loving each other, and knowing each other," said Frank M. Zuccarelli, Thornton Township supervisor. "We shouldn't have kids and police officers on opposite teams. We should have them side by side helping lift each other up. This

is something we are going to do every year, and it is going to be bigger and better."

Riverdale Park District lost the first game of the double-elimination tournament and then ran the table and won five consecutive games to win the championship.

"We are so thankful that the township organizes programs like this," said Kendall Parrott, executive director of the Riverdale Park District. "You were impressed on how coordinated and high-level this tournament was. We plan to be part of it for years to come—and hopefully repeat as champions next year."

The five-on-five basketball tournament, which was held at South Suburban College, is an example of many Thornton Township programs that focus on police officers and teenagers learning more about each other.

"You could immediately see that the basketball tournament really brought the officers and teenagers together. They huddled with each other, and encouraged and supported one another throughout the day," said Lamothe Jr. "We saw police officers, firefighters and village employees putting their arms around teenagers and just sitting down and having good conversations, laughing together and having a great time."

"We pride ourselves on creating new and exciting programs that both entertain and bring together our residents. This basketball tournament is just another example of that," added Jerry Jones, Thornton Township board member.



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