



# Ft. Pierce Police Department News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**R. Sean Baldwin**  
Chief of Police

920 S. U.S. #1  
Ft. Pierce, FL

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## New York trip changes lives of local teens

**FORT PIERCE** – After a visit to the Big Apple, the lives of nine girls involved with Fort Pierce Police Athletic League program will never be the same.

Six days ago, members of the Fort Pierce Police Athletic League Helen Abbott Theatre of Hope Praise Dancers arrived in New York for the experience of a life time. The group was among nearly 200 youth who were selected to participate in the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE) Youth Leadership Conference held in New York July 27-30.

When Master Officer Paul Pearson, who is executive director of PAL, appealed to the community for assistance in taking the group to New York, the community responded with overwhelming support and contributions.

“I will never forget visiting New York, the Empire State building and seeing the place where Malcolm X was shot,” said Tiffany Matthews, 18. “I truly enjoyed the conference and all the speakers. We were given so much information that will help us to develop our leadership skills and that will help us in life.”

Once the plane touched down in New York’s John F. Kennedy’s International Airport and the group began their journey to the Marriott Marquis in Time Square, the girls competed for positions to see the location where *Men In Black* was filmed, as we drove through the Lincoln Tunnel and as we approached Time Square.

“The hotel that we stayed in was beautiful” said Jada Stovall, 14, who experienced flying in an airplane for the first time. “The different places we visited were amazing.”

The group capped off their first night in New York by attending the performance of *The Lion King* and they were all in awe of the Disney Broadway production.

“That was the best performance I have ever seen,” said Margarita Santiago, 14. “Seeing the *Lion King* has changed the way I think about our rehearsal because we complain about little stuff. That show was amazing.”

When the conference got underway on Sunday, July 27, the girls attended several workshops devoted to developing their leadership skills, emphasizing the importance of community service and helping them plan for their futures.

“I was enriched by the views and personal life stories from the various presenters,” said Natasha Wells. “We discussed the different characteristics of a leader and I learned how I can use those characteristics to maximize my opportunities in life, both now and in the future.”

Jana Stovall connected with comedian Tommy Davidson, during a panel discussion about the entertainment industry. Stovall and Danielle Moore were most impressed with Davidson’s story about his rise to fame.

Stovall said, “I have to be my own person, be a leader and give people an image that shows more than just the way I dress, but what I stand for as a young black woman.

Moore said, “I will keep moving forward because the past is behind me and will look to the future. I will never give up no matter what happens.”

In addition to Davidson, the group met other notable African Americans including actor Seth Gilliam, known for his performance in several HBO dramas; Dee Marshall, president and CEO of Raise The Bar, LLC a coaching, training and development practice for women and Jami Floyd, former lawyer and current *Court TV* news anchor and legal analyst.

The conference culminated with a memorial march through the streets of Historic Harlem to the Abyssinian Baptist Church for a memorial service honoring deceased NOBLE members since the 2007 conference.

“I was amazed by the amount of effort that went into putting on the youth conference in order to help young people such as myself,” said Cimone Watson, 14. “It makes me want to give back to the community.”

Being able to take the group to New York to see a Broadway play and visit the Alvin Ailey School of dance has been a long-held desire for Brenda Cooper, the theatre’s director.

“I want the girls to experience the big city and also get a feel for what it takes, the time and preparation, to be a professional dancer,” Cooper said.

