Build a Badge

Objectives
After having this conversation as a family, you and your children will be able to

- recognize the importance of the law enforcement badge and the significance of shapes and symbols on the badge
- identify traits, tributes and beliefs of personal importance as they relate to your child’s badge design on the inside pages of this family activity guide

Conversation Starters
Consider the age of your child and determine the questions that your child might be most able and interested in responding to. When applicable, change the language to better accommodate your child’s level of understanding. Refer to the “Background Information” section on Page 1 for additional information about the questions. Start a conversation with your child by asking:

- How do you think you might recognize a law enforcement officer if they were wearing regular street clothes instead of a uniform? Once your child responds, show him/her the picture of the officer on Page 1. Ask them what they see in the photo and how this officer is different than a law enforcement officer they might meet today.
- If you were a law enforcement officer, do you think you would want to wear your everyday clothes or a uniform? Why or why not? Would you want to wear a badge? Why or why not?
- Look together at the examples of three different badges from the National Law Enforcement Museum’s collection on the inside of this Family Activity Guide. How are they similar? How are they different? What do you think the shape and symbols of each badge represent?
- Where else might you see symbols? What is the meaning of these other symbols you see around you?
- Look together at the badge that your child created on the inside page of the Family Activity Guide. Ask your child about specific parts of their badge, what each represents and why each is important. If they haven’t thought about the meaning, give them some ideas about what personal traits you see in them that they might want to represent on their badge.

Reflection and Conclusion
Ask each member of the family if this “Build a Badge” experience made them think differently. For example, do family members think differently about the law enforcement profession, the symbols and significance behind an officer’s badge, the designs and patterns used to create a badge, or the symbols they feel represent their own personal beliefs? Write their comments in the space below. When you have time, post them on the NLEM blog:

For More Information
About the National Law Enforcement Museum and the Museum’s Education Programs go to:
www.nationallawenforcementmuseum.org or call 202-737-3400.
Activity Instructions
Follow these steps and use the space below to create a badge that represents you and your family.

1. Choose an outline shape for your badge. Badges are often stars, ovals or shield shapes.

2. Think about symbols that represent things that are important to you and your family. Decide what symbols to include and where to place them on the badge.

3. Finish your badge by adding patterns and words that give your badge a completed design.

Badge Examples from the National Law Enforcement Museum Collection
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Background Information
Here are some interesting facts to share with your child about law enforcement in the U.S. and the significance of badges.

- Before the 1860s, law enforcement officers were not issued uniforms. Officers patrolled in street clothes. It was their badge that identified them as officers of the law.
- There are over 18,000 different law enforcement agencies in the U.S. This includes federal, state and local agencies, each with a unique official identifying badge.
- Today, each badge has a number that identifies the officer wearing that badge.
- A photograph of the oldest badge in NLEM’s collection, totaling 435 badges, is included on the center Activity page on a blue background. It is from Baltimore, MD. It was issued in 1862.
- A badge with a black band around it is worn by officers in remembrance of fellow officers killed in the line of duty.

What You and Your Child will Learn
After completing this activity, participants will:

- Know that each law enforcement agency in the U.S. is represented by a different badge
- Recognize that the shape and symbols of law enforcement badges are significant and have meaning
- Identify traits, tributes and beliefs of personal importance and create symbols to represent those traits

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