



Museum Mission

The mission of the National Law Enforcement Museum is to tell the story of American law enforcement through exhibits, collections, research and education. The Museum dynamically engages the broadest possible audience in this story in an effort to build mutual respect and foster cooperation between the public and the law enforcement profession. By doing so, the Museum contributes to a safer society and serves to uphold the democratic ideals of the U.S. Constitution.



Image from NLEOMF's Badge Activity at Arts on Foot 2008.

Parent Explanation

This activity is designed for parents and guardians to use with elementary school age children. By recognizing that there are over 18,000 different types of law enforcement badges, families will begin to think about the different role that the various law enforcement agencies play in their community and the nation. As families think about the individual meaning behind the many different badges, they will be better able to appreciate the complex nature of law enforcement in the United States. Ideally, this new understanding will begin to establish an appreciation for law enforcement that will lead to building respect and fostering cooperation.

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

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.



Collection of the NLEM 2006.112.1



National Law Enforcement MUSEUM

Education Programs
Family Activity Guide
Build a Badge

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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



Collection of the NLEM 2006.555.35



Collection of the NLEM 2007.4.14



Collection of the NLEM 2008.53.34
Badge, Sheriff Lucius Ameron



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 :

www.lawenforcementmuseum.blogspot.com

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.