

# The Willow School

Advocates for Arts-Based Education Corp.  
*"Celebrating cultural diversity through high academics and the arts"*

November 4, 2022


Dear Fellow Educator,

I am writing to express my highest recommendation for Crimestoppers (Greater New Orleans Area) and their Safe School Programs, which includes the **Safe Schools Louisiana Anonymous reporting app** "Say it Here". I have had the privilege to work hand in hand with Crimestoppers and their President/CEO Darlene Cusanza for over eight years. This includes my time as the Chief of Safety, Security, and Discipline with the Orleans Parish Public Schools and currently, as the Executive Director of Campus Safety & Culture for The Willow Charter School in New Orleans. It was due to the positive experience working with Crimestoppers and their anonymous tip program in the Orleans Parish Public Schools that I contacted Darlene Cusanza, when I was hired as the Executive Director of Campus Safety & Culture for The Willow School (previously Lusher Charter schools) as we implemented our student safety plan for the 2022-23 school year.

As the Executive Director and a reserve police officer with the New Orleans Police Department, I have the insight and understanding of the significance of gathering intelligence from our students concerning their school environment to integrate into our intervention and prevention programs. The system needs to first be believable by the students and in a voice and format they are most comfortable using. Crimestoppers "Safe Schools LA" has provided that, both with the recognizable name and reputation of Crimestoppers, but also in the online format of an app. Secondly, the information needs to be made available in real-time and offer students an opportunity to have a two-way dialogue. Crimestoppers does just that. They also provide the students a chance to come back to their tips, for updates and closure. But I completely understand that Crimestoppers Safe Schools LA does not work in a vacuum, and the school must be actively promoting and showing results from the program, which we have done by using the marketing materials provided by Crimestoppers, as well as student training videos and in-person presentations.

In closing, throughout the many years of working with Crimestoppers, we have seen their willingness to go above and beyond to promote student safety. From school climate "Peace Summits" to active shooter drills and presentations, they are there whenever requested. Over a recent weekend, Darlene received a very alarming tip about teacher abuse in a classroom. As that school had not signed on to using the app, she contacted me because of my previous position. We successfully located the principal of that school to send on the tip. It was her persistence and emotional appeal to the tip material that truly showed her desire to put student safety above all. It is this professionalism and commitment that far outweighs any product of anonymous reporting. It's her dedication, her understanding the local climate and her commitment to always putting our students "first" that allows me to offer my support and complete endorsement of the Crimestoppers Safe Schools Programs and Safe Schools Louisiana Anonymous Reporting App.

Sincerely,



Ulyses Collins, Ed.D