

## WISE DUMMIES TEACH RESPECT

By Robert J. Walsh, master deputy, Norfolk, VA

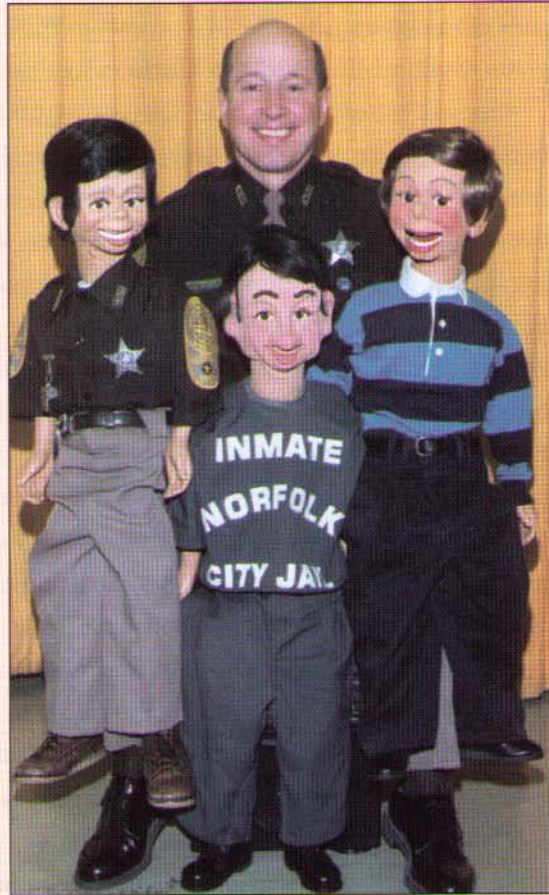
I rely on three dummies to spread words of wisdom. The dummies join me in my Deputy Bob persona when I visit elementary schools and prison cells to talk about crime and respect. The four of us are assigned to the Sheriff's Office in Norfolk, Virginia. We've been a team for more than 20 years.

I am a professional ventriloquist and a crime prevention specialist. My three friends are of the Basswood family: sturdy, light, always eager for work, and quite capable of catching the attention of boys and girls of all ages.

Over the last seven years, Inmate Joe, Deputy Matthew, Jeremiah Student, and I have talked about "choices" to 70,000 students in public and private schools. Our road show is billed as "Choices with Deputy Bob." We teach the young students to handle conflict without violence, to respect others, endorse kindness, and shun drugs. We also try to build the students' self-esteem.

Here's how one of our routine acts went at a local school. In front of an audience of third, fourth, and fifth graders, Deputy Bob and Inmate Joe start talking to each other about respect. During the chat, Inmate Joe digresses, as he is wont, and asks Deputy Bob for the time. Deputy Bob says his watch is broken. Deputy Bob and Inmate Joe wander happily off on a tangent, concluding that the ticker on the watch and the "ticker" in a person's chest must be in working order. Deputy Bob says that working order for the human heart means an attitude that respects the rights and worth of all people.

Inmate Joe doesn't buy it. He has a different idea of respect. He respects his own rights and doesn't give a hoot about anyone else's rights or worth. That sort of attitude, Deputy Bob says, might be the reason that Inmate Joe is . . . well, an inmate. Inmate Joe says people should just worry about themselves. Deputy Bob paraphrases Dr. Martin Luther King,



**Deputy Bob and the Basswood Family—Inmate Joe, Deputy Matthew, and Jeremiah Student—have teamed up to catch the attention of youths for 20 years.**