From Night School to Citizens Academy

English program jumps across the pond

In 1977, the Devon & Cornwall Constabulary, Middlemoor, Exeter in England established the first “Police Night School.”

The pilot course indicated that a 10-week course was sufficient to meet the basic information requirements for citizens who were anxious to learn about police functions, police operations, and the organization of the police system.

The group quickly developed an “identity” which enhanced discussion. It became apparent in the early stages of the course, that the most informed members of the public were unaware of the complexities of police work.

The constabulary was soon overwhelmed with applicants and the program was permanently adopted as part of an ongoing police public relations program.

In 1985, the first Citizen Police Academy in the United States was established in Florida by the Orlando Police Department. It was such a success that you will now find Citizen Police Academy programs throughout the United States in communities large and small.

There also is a National Citizens Police Academy Association.
Policing is a Partnership

The Greer Police Department adheres to a simple motto: “Policing is a Partnership.” The department truly depends on the support it receives from the citizens it serves.

To help citizens better understand and support the department, GPD created the Citizens Police Academy. This 12-week program, which is free to those who enroll, offers insight into how police officers perform their duties and how the department serves the community.

Quite simply, it fosters better communication between citizens and police through education.

The Citizens Police Academy has even inspired several alumni to create the CPA Alumni Association through which members provide direct assistance to the department.

We can’t promise that you’ll be so motivated that you’ll dive right into the alumni association, but we can promise that the Citizens Police Academy will engage you and provide greater insight into police practices and services.

The department’s hope is that academy alumni will share this new knowledge with other members of the community. Everyone benefits when citizens understand the role and function of their local police department.

The Citizens Police Academy consists of weekly two-hour classes over a 12-week period. The instruction is comprehensive, covering a different area of the police department’s work each week.

Participants learn about:

- Community Oriented Policing Services Program
- Police Training Officer Program
- Narcotics Investigations
- Recruitment
- Patrol Procedures
- Emergency Response Team
- Communications
- Detention
- Media/Public Relations
- Accident Reconstruction
- Traffic Stops
- Defensive Tactics
- Gangs
- School Resource Officers
- Fingerprinting
- Criminal Investigations
- Community Outreach
- Use of Control Techniques
- Firearm Training Simulator

Certified police officers, supervisors and civilian instructors with particular expertise will conduct each session.

A vital part of the academy is role playing and scenarios. Participants will also experience a ride along with an officer.

The program has inspired many who never previously considered learning more about police work and officers.

So who is the typical participant at the Citizens Police Academy? Actually, there isn’t one. Alumni represent a wide variety of occupations and age ranges.

Anyone who resides or works in or around the City of Greer is encouraged to attend. Those who are participate in community activities – whether youth involvement or neighborhood watch – are very important to the academy.

There are a few prerequisites to participate in the Citizens Police Academy. Successful applicants will:

- Have an interest in learning about their local police department and government.
- Live or work in or near Greer.
- Be at least 18 years of age.
- Have no prior felony convictions.

All classes are free, but class sizes are limited. Sessions are held in the Greer Police Department’s training room.

Ready to Learn More?

Visit the Greer Police Department site at www.cityofgreer.org for a downloadable application. You are also welcome to check out the Citizens Police Academy pages or email presgcpaaa954@gmail.com.