

The John H. Stamler Police Academy

The John H. Stamler Police Academy, located on Raritan Road in Scotch Plains, continues to offer dozens of programs designed to prepare recruits for successful careers in the field of law enforcement.

Prior to graduation, recruits undergo 1,000 hours of rigorous training during a 20-week program based on a course of study established by the New Jersey Police Training Commission.

The program includes 13 functional areas of study encompassing 890 separate items, according to academy Director Anthony J. Parenti. In addition, the academy offers about 25 electives, some of which involve more in-depth study of subjects in the functional categories. The academy offers courses in narcotic enforcement, vehicle theft, sex crimes and bicycle patrol, among others.

This comprehensive curriculum addresses "every possible thing (police officers) will encounter on the street," revealed Mr. Parenti, who noted that police officers are often thrust into the roles of "doctor, lawyer and Indian chief" when dealing with the public.

Police academy recruits are required to pass each fundamental area by at least 70 percent. If they are unable to, they are assigned a tutor and given another chance to pass. If they still cannot achieve the required score, they are dismissed.

In addition to classroom work, each recruit must undergo multiple hours of physical training prior to graduation, said Mr. Parenti.

In light of recent allegations of police brutality in the Garden State, he said the academy is increasing its emphasis on police morals and ethical standards.

Each incoming class at the academy is made up of about 50 to 60 officers-in-training, ranging in age from 21 to 36, from throughout Union County who commute daily to the academy. The academy graduates about 50 recruits biannually.

Applicants, in order to be admitted to the academy, must pass mental, physical and medical requirements. Additional criteria is set by individual police departments, which submit recruit applications to the academy.

Trainees are taught by some 150 volunteer instructors, all of whom are experts in their respective fields. Mr. Parenti said these instructors come from various police departments around Union County and the Prosecutor's Office, as well as from the private sector.

This year's roster of volunteer instructors included Fanwood Mayor Maryanne S. Connelly, who taught a course on stress management, and writer Adele Kenny. Ms. Kenny, also of Fanwood, offered instruction on grammar and spelling. Mr. Parenti noted that the latter course is beneficial for report writing.

For the physical part of the training process, the academy enlists a physical instructor with five volunteer assistants.

Officers are expected to follow up on their 20-week instructional session and required to complete on-the-job training.

Founded in 1946 by the Union County Police Chiefs Association, the police academy has been located at various sites around Union County. In 1989, the current "state-of-the-art facility was built on the Union County Vocational-Technical Schools property on Raritan Road.

The facility was dedicated on November 18, 1991 and welcomed its first class in late January of 1992. Mr. Parenti, who took over as Director nearly two years ago, was a police officer himself for 41 years, including 22 as Fanwood's Chief of Police.

The academy is named for the late Union County Prosecutor John H. Stamler, who was instrumental in forming a partnership between the Union County Police Chiefs Association and the Union County Prosecutor's Office. Union County Prosecutor Thomas Manahan of Westfield currently oversees the academy.

For further information, please call (908) 889-6112. The fax number is (908) 889-6359.



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