

The John H. Stamler Police Academy

Hidden in the backyard of Scotch Plains is the John H. Stamler Police Academy. Described as one of the best statewide by its Director, Anthony J. Parenti, the academy offers dozens of police training programs and graduates nearly 40 recruits biannually.

Before graduation, recruits are put through a rigorous 1,000-hour training program, according to Mr. Parenti, who is no newcomer to the law enforcement field. A police officer for 41 years, he served as Chief of Police in Fanwood for 22 years before assuming his current post in January.

The 20-week police academy program, which trainees attend from 5:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. each day, is based on a course of study established by the New Jersey Police Training Commission.

There are 13 areas of study, covering such topics as first aid, constitution, decision-making, and driving. Recruits are required to pass each fundamental area by at least 70 percent, and if unable, they are assigned a tutor and given another chance to pass. If they still cannot achieve the required score, however, they are dismissed.

"When it comes to dealing with lives and protecting lives, you don't get a second chance," explained Mr. Parenti.

Besides the work in the classroom, each recruit must undergo many hours of physical training before graduation, the Police Academy Director maintained.

Mr. Parenti stresses the academy's dedication to instructing recruits in police morals and ethical standards, which he said are especially important in an age when allegations of police brutality have appeared in the news.

"The product going out into the street should have the highest moral and ethical standards, and we are in the process of implementing this," he explained.

Each incoming class is made up of about 50 to 60 officers-in-training from all over Union County who commute daily to the academy. There are 50 male students for every four female recruits at the academy, ranging in age from 21 to 36.

In order to be admitted, applicants must pass mental, physical, and medical requirements. Other criteria are set by the individual police departments, which submit recruit applications to the academy.

The trainees are taught by about 150 staff instructors, all of whom are experts in their respective fields of law, medicine, or prosecution, who provide their knowledge at no cost to the academy. 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 are required to complete on-the-job training. In 1999, for example, officers must attend in-service instruction in ethics and a firearms training system. Other courses are optional and are specific to particular departmental needs.

The academy offers courses in narcotic enforcement, vehicle theft, sex crimes,

or bicycle patrol, to name a few.

"As long as we have a free society, we'll need police," commented Mr. Parenti, reflecting on the demand for police officers in the work force.

"(Police work) is more than a game of cops and robbers," he added. "It has become a profession that (includes) life savers."

The police academy was founded in 1946 by the Union County Police Chiefs Association, and has been located at various sites in Union County.

In 1989, construction started on the current "state-of-the-art" facility, which was built on the Union County Vocational-Technical Schools property on Raritan Road.

It was dedicated on November 18, 1991 and welcomed its first class in late January of 1992. The facility was named after the late John H. Stamler, a Union County prosecutor, who was instrumental in forming a partnership between the Union County Police Chiefs Association and the Union County Prosecutor's Office.

This partnership, according to an academy publication, "enabled broader opportunities for the basic in-service training programs, and ensures maintaining the highest standards of training, competence, and professionalism."

Union County Prosecutor Thomas

Manahan, a Westfield resident, oversees the academy today.

"It is the prosecutor's wish for this academy to be number one and that is my goal," Mr. Parenti stated. For further information, please call (908) 889-6112. The fax number is (908) 889-6359.



CAREER BEGINNINGS...The John H. Stamler Police Academy, located on Raritan Road in Scotch Plains, provides recruits with a rigorous training program to prepare them for a career in law enforcement. It is headed by former Fanwood Police Chief Anthony J. Parenti.

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