

Edwardsville officers show citizens ins, outs, of police work with academy

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EDWARDSVILLE – The **Edwardsville Police Department** conducts an abundance of public service efforts for the community above and beyond the daily routine and another is the **Citizen's Police Academy**.

The purpose of the Edwardsville Police Department's Citizen's Police Academy is to allow residents to learn about constitutional law, rights of citizens and the duties of law-enforcement officers. The academy gives participants a chance to learn certain aspects of law enforcement through a "hands-on" learning environment.

Sgt. Matt Breihan said the hope is that citizens will have a better understanding of what officers do day in day out.

"At the first class, there is a short presentation that is a tribute to all the officers," Breihan said. "We get them in the frame of mind that this isn't a game and there are no take-backs.

"These are real-life decisions and real-life scenarios. We teach them about force issues. Participants are thrown into scenarios and have to make decisions on what level of force to use."

Breihan said he has heard over and over from students what "an eye-opening experience it has been to be a part of the academy."

"They can't believe how fast you have to make decisions as a law enforcement officer," Breihan said.

Constitutional law and rights of citizens are one the most important facets of the class and that is a large part of the sessions.

This past Thursday, a real-life video of an Edwardsville Police officer stopping a motorist who eventually resisted arrest was shown. The officer was extremely patient in the video when the man refused over and over again not to get out of the car.

Later, another police officer came to the scene to assist. Eventually, the man finally got out of the vehicle and was arrested for resisting the officer's orders. Class members are fascinated by the authentic videos and after watching them, they had a much better appreciation for what officers deal with on patrol.

Some of the students experience fear when they get in the different staged situations, Breihan said.

“We use airsoft guns and only foam comes out of a device like a taser,” he said. “We have 19 students this time and every single one of them is engaged. They can ask any question they want and they will get an honest answer from the officers.”

Academy sessions include tours, demonstrations and practical exercises that will allow participants to experience life from a police officer’s point of view. The first session with the current group started Sept. 15.

Topics covered in the Citizens Police Academy:

- Law review
- Traffic/DUI enforcement
- Use of force, excited delirium, crisis intervention
- Firearms familiarization
- Force on force/active shooter hands on exercise
- Drug trends and identification
- Crime scene investigation with hands on exercise
- Computer crimes and identity theft
- 4-hour ride along

The class runs from 6 to 9 p.m. on Thursdays. For \$25, people get to attend the 10-week class. On graduation night, they are given a t-shirt and some other supplies.

“We have had nothing but praises from students,” Breihan said. “We have students from as far away as Swansea. Edwardsville citizens get priority first, though.”

