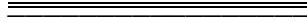
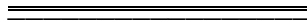


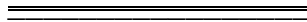
**The Bill Blackwood
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas**



Citizen Police Academies and Law Enforcement



**A Leadership White Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Required for Graduation from the
Leadership Command College**



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ABSTRACT

Implementing citizen's police academies is relevant to contemporary law enforcement because law enforcement as a profession must continue to protect and serve the citizens of this nation. Law enforcement has been placed into a strenuous state due to the economic conditions that are facing the nation, but each agency must persevere through these difficult times. Law enforcement can thrive during this time by soliciting help from the community. Many citizens are more than willing to help out the protectors of their municipalities and counties, but they need to be asked. The position of the research is that a citizen's police academy should be implemented into law enforcement agencies.

The types of information used to support the researcher's position included a review of articles, Internet sites, periodicals, and journals. Research showed how indispensable citizen's police academies can be to law enforcement (Patterson, 1995; Bonello & Schafer, 2002). The recommendation drawn from this paper is that all law enforcement agencies should adopt citizen police academies into their community oriented programs.

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INTRODUCTION

The world of law enforcement is a rapidly changing career that requires professionals and managers within the field to constantly keep up. In recent years, budgets and the numbers of officers patrolling the streets have been reduced due to economic hardships. With these more uncertain times, law enforcement must adapt to the shortage and create ways to combat crime with less funding and personnel. Many agencies already do some sort of community-oriented program. Agencies are making themselves more available to the community while on patrol. A program exists that can be implemented into any agency that will help do more for them than just waving or smiling while driving in neighborhoods, and this program is called a citizen's police academy. This program is an opportunity for the agency to develop future volunteers for the agency, improve better working relations with the community, and educate the citizens as well. This is why every law enforcement agency should incorporate citizen police academies into their community-oriented programs. The best way for the community and an agency to thrive is to understand each other and their needs. This is accomplished by getting to know each other on a more personal level. It must be understood that the concept of "we and they" needs to be changed into "us" (Coffey, Eldefonso, & Hartinger, 1982). Bringing citizens into partnership with an agency will improve the relationship and provide a better working environment.

To understand the purposes of citizen's police academies, one must first understand where academies originated and the roll they fill. The history of law enforcement began in 1829 with the formation of the London Metropolitan Police District. The purpose of this was to control soaring crime located around the city, and

Sir Robert Peel, the father of law enforcement, created beats. These officers began walking the streets in an attempt to control crime. This is the first time that law enforcement and the community started interacting with one another. A different philosophy changed law enforcement in America at the turn of the century. It was not until 1985, when the Orlando Florida Police Department established the first citizen's police academy, that the true power of community policing was recognized. At the heart of the new philosophy were collaboration, communication, and more interaction between the police and community (Patterson, 1995). Since that time, many agencies across the nation have adopted some sort of citizen's police academies, but there are still many other agencies that need to take advantage of the program.

POSITION

In order for citizen's police academies to be effective in the community, citizens need to receive adequate education and training. The education of citizens is a very important advantage to the citizen's police academy. The goal of the academy is to present a realistic perspective into what policing truly is and what it is about. Citizens are always watching television and observing unrealistic ideas about law enforcement. Many television programs portray police officer out to be as a "crooked cop" who indulges in the sins of life. The cop will do drugs, steal or violate someone's civil rights by making false arrests or using excessive force. On the other hand, prime time television shows, such as Crime Scene Investigators (CSI), show police as having super computers that assist law enforcement in solving every crime they come into contact with. In reality, law enforcement is quite complex, and, many times, the solvability of many crimes is not as easy as that which they show on television.

If an officer comes into contact with a citizen at a home burglary, the citizen may believe that like Gilbert “Gill” Grissom, Ph.D., on CSI, who would make quick and easy work of the situation, the officer should be able to do the same; this is unfair to the officer, the agency, and law enforcement as a whole. The best way to correct this situation is to educate the citizens within the community about the process of such an incident. A citizen’s police academy would allow an agency to have their crime scene investigators teach a section within the academy. The instructors would be able to inform citizens of the procedures that the department utilizes while dealing with a crime scene. Citizens within the academy would be able to practice fingerprinting different types of surfaces in an attempt to lift prints. Educating citizens is very important in implementing a citizen’s police academy.

One area that citizens need to be educated in is the process of making traffic stops. This has the potential to build a bridge between law enforcement and communities. Many times, citizens complain about the demeanor of officers while on traffic stops, claiming that the officer’s were short tempered or rude with them. It would be very beneficial for a class to be dedicated to educating citizens on traffic stops. The citizens could gain firsthand experience by making controlled stops in a parking lot in which they perform a seven-step violator contact. Educating citizens that there is more to traffic stops than just writing tickets will allow for better understanding and will reduce citizen’s complaints. Through participation, citizens can begin to view officer’s conduct as being acceptable motives rather than inappropriate biases (Bonello & Schafer, 2002).

Another part of the citizen's academy is that participants are allowed to ride out with officers while on shift work. This observation allows citizens to develop an appreciation for the challenges associated with policing communities (Bonello & Schafer, 2002). The citizens will be able to experience what an officer must deal with throughout the shift. The citizen will be able to see how dynamic shift work is. The big advantage of the citizen ride-along is that the officer and the citizen will be in a patrol car together and communication between the two will be one-on-one. This dialogue humanizes officers and allows citizens to feel more comfortable with officers. Citizens see that police are similar to them in that they have families, and law enforcement is a difficult job (Weiss & Davis, 2004). Inspection Division Assistant Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) stated that "through their citizen's police academy, they try to demystify the FBI. I think putting a human face on the agency goes a long way in building trust with law enforcement" ("Community Outreach Program-FBI Citizens Academy," 2009, p. 2).

Once a more comfortable relationship has been set, this will improve any future working relationships between citizens and law enforcement personnel. To some, "the police station is a grim, fear-provoking place" that prevents citizens from going inside to make calls or report suspicious activity that is going on (Fink & Sealy, 1974, p. 120). By having a better working relationship, citizens are more likely to go to the police station. This also goes for the officer while out on patrol in the patrol car. Citizens may want to report suspicious activity to the officer while the patrolling officer is in the citizen's neighborhood. Citizens, after having gone through a citizen's academy, will be able to provide more crucial and valuable information to the officers. If a citizen is having

trouble with vandalism in a neighborhood, they may now be more willing to communicate information to officers due to feeling more comfortable and having that better working relationship. The best example of this working relationship took place in Boston Massachusetts in the early and mid 1990's. A group of reverends started the Ten Point Coalition, which opened a working relationship between the reverends and the police. Police began patrolling the streets in the same neighborhoods every day, establishing solid relationships with the residents (McGinn & Genderon, 2000). The increased police presence manifested a better working relationship between the community and police. This helped the community and law enforcement reduce the homicide rate to a 38 year low in 1999 (McGinn & Genderon, 2000). This showed the power of a better working relationship between the citizens and law enforcement, and an easy way to accomplish this relationship is to have a citizen's police academy.

The next and most valuable part of the citizen's police academy to a law enforcement agency is the development of volunteers. Once a class has graduated from a citizen's police academy, most go on to join an alumni association. From that point, citizens involve themselves in supporting the police department and the community that they live or work in. The citizens will volunteer to assist the agency in a wide variety of programs. A popular program is that of a parking enforcement program. The citizens will go through another small class and be educated on parking laws, such as handicap parking. The citizens will then go out and enforce handicap parking violations in the community. By the citizens helping enforce parking complaints, this allows the regular officers the opportunity to concentrate on other criminal activity. The next part of this is that other citizens within the community will see that steps are being

taken to make sure parking violators are dealt with. Both the law enforcement agency and the citizens program gets credit for a job well done. This will increase the popularity of both within the community as well. Other ways in which the citizens can volunteer is that they can help out around the agency. Citizens can volunteer their time to help in answering non-emergency telephone calls and directing those calls to the appropriate offices. For some small to middle sized agencies, dispatchers often have to answer both non-emergency calls and 911 calls. The citizen directing the non-emergency calls enables the dispatcher to be able to answer only emergency calls. Another part that citizens can volunteer time in is paperwork filing. Agencies have hard copy paperwork that needs to be filed and stored or sent to County and District Attorney's offices. A volunteer citizen can file or store the paperwork without a full time agency employee having to do the job. Once again, this will enable the full time employees or even eliminate a position all together, which will save on the budget. Citizens also volunteer in traffic control at local events, such as Christmas parades and fairs. A properly trained citizen can effectively direct traffic just as well as a police officer can.

COUNTER POSITION

As with any program that an agency thinks about initiating, they have to be worried about the possibility of the negative aspects that go along with the program. When a citizen's police academy is thought about, the first and biggest worry is the possibility of civil liability. All agencies are fearful that when they begin to involve citizens in the daily operations of law enforcement, something wrong can happen. Even if citizens are required to fill out liability release forms prior to beginning any academy, administrators still have fears. Some academies provide a class to the citizens

involving firearms and firearm safety. Agencies often allow the citizens to even shoot weapons that the agency uses on a daily basis. Anytime that anyone uses deadly force, whether because it is training or out of necessity, there is a potential for injury or death. Administration wants nothing to do with the idea, due to their fear for this happening to a citizen. However, this is no different from the possibility that an officer may be injured while training with firearms. The most important thing to remember is proper training (Aryani, Garrett, & Alsabrook, 2000). Proper training is given to officers prior to being allowed to handle a firearm. Citizens need the same training. Agencies that allow the citizens to partake in firearms training can put the citizens through a safety course prior to going to the gun range. This provides the citizens with proper firearm handling and safety techniques, which can also be used in their personal lives.

Another liability factor to look at is that many citizens are allowed to ride with officers while on duty. The one certain thing for an officer is that, while on duty, there is no certainty. When an officer gets into his patrol car the next call is never known. A citizen who is allowed to ride with an officer is subjected to the same dangers that the officer is. Simply sitting in the patrol car while on a traffic stop can be a dangerous place to be for an officer. According to the Officer Down Memorial website, 60 officers were killed in 2008 in traffic related accidents (The Officer Down Memorial Page, Inc, 2009). For an administrator, that uncertainty can be a reason for not having a citizen's police academy. The goal of law enforcement is to protect and serve, and allowing citizens to be placed in danger while participating in a ride-along is more than administrators are willing to do. A fact to remember is that the citizen's police academy

can be whatever the agency wants it to be, so if administrators do not feel comfortable with the citizens being in the car, then that part of the program could be revised.

Another issue that can be brought up about starting a citizen's police academy is the manpower that it takes. Academies are either going to be in the evening hours or on weekends, and a question of who is going to instruct must be addressed. Academies should utilize a wide variety of knowledge from all of their officers. If this is done, then a serious look at the number of officers available should be taken into consideration. Classes taught at night by officer instructors who work days or vice versa could also cause an issue. There may be a class on traffic stops and the instructor may need an officer to be the suspect during role play. For an agency that does not have the luxury of designated officers to handle community oriented programs, this will put a severe strain on personnel. Due to recent budget cuts, many agencies have not been able to hire new officers, and taking an officer off the street to teach a class is improbable. A small police department in Marfa, Texas was dismantled in the fall of 2009 to save the city \$90,000 (Kocherga, 2009). Larger departments have been affected as well. In Austin, Texas, the police department had to cut almost nine million from its budget, including a recruit police academy (Plohetski, 2009). A citizen's police academy can be developed to fit each individual agency's needs. With proper planning, a course curriculum can be developed so officers can instruct while they are on duty, which would exclude overtime pay, and some officers may even volunteer their time (Aryani, Garrett, & Alsabrook, 2000).

A big problem with starting a citizen's police academy is the perspective that individual officers have towards community policing. Many officers resist change

because they are accustomed to the norm that is their job. Police often see the negative side of individuals on a daily basis and not that of success. With this thinking, it is hard for officers to believe that change will work and make a difference in the community and the department. Police see themselves as alone in the fight against crime, and that it is them versus the world (Ellison, 2006). An officer from the beginning of his career is taught to fight crime and protect the community, not walk hand-in-hand with them.

Another factor for officers is that they see that crime over the years has not changed or lowered at the local level. Officers see the same crime committed day after day. The Decatur Police Department in Texas saw a 5.9% increase in the number of calls from 2009 to 2010 (Decatur Police Department, 2010). However, overall crime stats across the nation have lowered for three consecutive years, and property crime stats have lowered for the seventh straight year ("2009 Property Crime," 2010). Although officers have more technology to assist in fighting crime, the elusiveness of the criminals is still prevalent. Many officers have negative attitudes about change and community oriented programs that are relevant for citizen's police academies. This problem is easily remedied by allowing officers to participate in citizen's police academies. Allowing the officers to participate in the program gives them the opportunity to have a sense of pride in their profession because officers are able to communicate the details of the profession to people who are truly interested (Weiss & Davis, 2004). This is something that officers normally do not get an opportunity to do with other citizens outside of the citizen's police academy. Changing the perspective of

the officers who are reluctant will have a dramatic effect on the concept of the citizen's police academy.

RECOMMENDATION

Citizen police academies can be a great benefit to law enforcement agencies all across the nation. The profession of law enforcement is not ending anytime in the future, but agencies must look to improve so that they can thrive. Administrators should take a serious look at the positives that come from the implementation of a citizen's police academy. Administrators can contact other agencies that are currently conducting citizen's police academies and inquire as to what works. The best part of starting an academy is that the program can be suited to fit any department. The size or available budget has no affect on what the academy can be made into. Budgeting for a citizen's police academy, depending on the program can be as little or as large as wanted (Fugett, 1996). Being creative in design allows the program to show the strengths of the department. Reaching out to the community can be unpleasant, but if done right, the rewards and benefits will be well worth it and long lasting. Agencies should strive to strengthen the bond between the community and the law enforcement agency. In law enforcement there is only one customer and that is the community that all officers take an oath to protect and serve.

Law enforcement agencies should adopt citizen's police academies into their community-oriented programs, because building a better working relationship with the community should be a high priority. Simply educating the community will allow citizens to know what a majority of their tax dollars go to. Educated citizens will then go out and are an ambassador for the department. This citizen and the department will have better

communications between the two. Being able to communicate better will improve the perception of the agency and it will have more of an impact on the citizens within that community. The citizens will then go out to volunteer more time in assisting the agency. Administrators must remember that the greater the citizens involvement and participation in the day-to-day activities, the easier it is for agencies to request and receive support, compliance, and comfort (Fink & Sealy, 1974). Citizen participation in law enforcement is a way of identifying the police as an organization of the people and for the people.

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