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Citizens academy shows police at work

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Abstract

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Full Text

-- Jordan Buie, 425-9782

Jackson residents now have the chance to get an inside look at the operations of the police department, as it kicked off the Fall Citizen's Police Academy Class Tuesday night. The class will be held for the next eight weeks.

"The CPAC offers Jackson residents a level of transparency into the Jackson Police Department they don't get a chance to have on an ordinary basis, as well as educates them on ways they can help keep their communities safe," said Police Chief Gill Kendrick at the class Tuesday night. "Those taking the course will have a strong overview of what we do here and the role they can play in what we do."

Kendrick said that many people have a skewed view of law enforcement because of the various ways it is presented to them through the media. He said the purpose of the class is to tear down some of those divides and to help people move away from the "us and them" view of law enforcement.

"In a way, training citizens to be extra eyes and ears in their communities is force multiplication," Kendrick said. "During the course, we will show them demographics that will help citizens know where and what to look for."

Kendrick said that by looking at the facts and figures of crimes committed in previous years, it is possible to take that information and perform what is called "predictive policing," or policing that puts law enforcement in the position to stop crimes before they can be committed.

One example he gave was that of a particular street that has previously been known for burglaries. Kendrick said that by both patrolling that area and notifying members of the community to keep watch, it was possible to either prevent crimes or to quickly capture the perpetrators.

Kendrick also told the story of how the Tampa Police Department in Tampa, Fla., determined that four types of crimes were committed the most and were also responsible for other crimes that surrounded them. He said that by focusing on these crimes the city was able to cut down crime there by 46 percent in four years.

"We can do that here," Kendrick said.

Investigator Abe Jones is a member of the department who will be instructing the class each week. He said he is excited about the relationships he believes the class can foster with the community.

"The class will equip the citizens with more information as to how the police department actually works," Jones said. "This way they can go back to their friends and families and explain what it is they have learned."

Kendrick presented a slide show on the history of Jackson and the development of the police department over the years. The presentation showed the facts and figures of police officers who give their lives each year in the line of duty, and he said the number is on the rise.

"It's sad what is indicative of our community," Kendrick said. "Violence in our communities is reaching numbers we have not seen since the 1970s."

Kendrick also said he thought the standards of what it takes to become a police officer are higher than he has ever seen, and that due to the department's adherence to a code of order, he said he believed they were all "singing on the same page."

Cheri Spencer is a new member of the Jackson community who signed up for the class. She said she signed up because her job is to recruit new physicians into the area and she wanted to know more about her new community.

"I decided to be a part of the class because I am a new citizen of Jackson, and I wanted to know how the police department serves the community," Spencer said. "My dad was a police officer for 50 years, so I have always had a lot of respect for law enforcement officers, but I wanted a chance to meet law enforcement here."

"Law enforcement is more than just a job," Kendrick said. "It is a form of ministry to the community."

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