

Citizen Police Academy II

Taking a Step Beyond the Initial CPA Class

BY DANIEL P. SMITH

While many communities run a CPA class with graduates often joining the ranks of an alumni group, Lake in the Hills, a northwest suburb of Chicago, takes another step by providing interested graduates the chance to enroll in a CPA II class that further enhances the department's ties to its community members.

Lake in the Hills, a community of 29,000 residents, first began offering its CPA class in April, 1994, originally offering one 10-week class in the spring and another in the fall. Once students completed the class, there was nothing to address their persisting interest, a void that led students to clamor for more time. Within two years, Lake in the Hills had its CPA II class up and running.

"The students were so enthralled that they did not want it to end, so we added another five weeks," says Lake in the Hills Officer Pete Albanese, the department's current CPA class coordinator.

Minus an alumni group in Lake in the Hills, the CPA II concept is a novel one that keeps community members involved and allows them to understand their local law enforcement agency in a deeper, more thorough way. According to Albanese, 98 percent of graduates from the last three CPA I classes have enrolled in the CPA II class.

Whereas the CPA I class is filled with classroom instruction, including an overview of law enforcement in the village, the department structure,



forensics, and criminal investigations, the CPA II class takes a more active, hands-on approach. Students take a tour of the McHenry County Jail, participate in shooting exercises at the range, and learn defensive tactics, and handcuffing. Other CPA II endeavors include mock traffic stops utilizing squad cars and a mock bench trial using an old case in which class members are assigned roles, such as judge, defense attorney, and prosecutor.

"The goals from CPA I to II do not change," said Albanese, adding that the department's commitment to exposing citizens to their agency, teaching them crime prevention strategies, and creating a more comprehensive understanding of law enforcement's efforts remain a constant.

Given the five-week time frame, the CPA II course, which has hosted 10 to 18 students, is less expensive to run. In most cases, officers on shift teach the classes, a move that reduces the expense.

Of the CPA II course, student and Lake in the Hills resident Julio Soto says: "[The course] allowed us to get a reality version of what we learned in part one, and help us understand our lessons through hands-on activities, defensive courses, and the real-life emotions inside the correctional systems.

Grateful for the program, Soto has shared stories from the experience with friends and relatives. He has also become more observant and educated on law enforcement mat-

ters, opening his eyes intellectually and emotionally to the police officer's plight.

"And most importantly," Soto continues, "I have increased my respect and confidence for everyone who is involved in protecting us. I shall no longer take for granted any situation." ♦

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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