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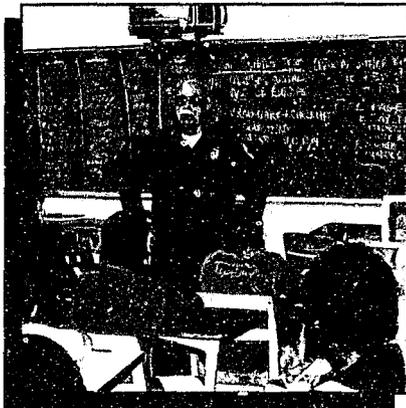
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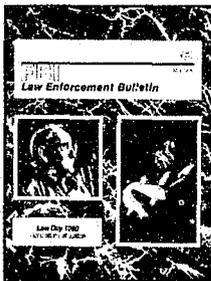
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The Cover: Two generations of Americans, the youth and the elderly, are the focus of this year's Law Day celebrations.

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William S. Sessions, Director

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Law Enforcement Exploring

By
STEVE FARISH



Two one-man police units respond to a burglary-in-progress call at a local church in Irving, Texas. One unit, however, is noticeably different—it carries an extra passenger, a civilian. As the two police officers search the building for suspects, the civilian passenger remains with the police vehicles to watch for any suspicious activity. Without warning, three male suspects run out of the chapel doors, across a courtyard and toward a parking lot. The

civilian uses the police radio to advise the dispatcher, as well as the other officers, of the suspects' descriptions and in which direction they are heading. Because of this civilian's understanding of police procedures, all three suspects are apprehended. The civilian rider is a Law Enforcement Explorer.

What is Law Enforcement Exploring?

Law Enforcement Exploring is a branch of the Boy Scouts of

America (BSA), but its members are not Boy Scouts. Rather, Explorers are young men and women ranging in age from 14 to 20 who are interested in law enforcement careers. The Exploring Program brings enthusiastic youths into a police department to participate firsthand in such activities as traffic and crowd control, crime prevention, security surveys and patrol ride-along programs. Explorers do not take the place of regular officers, but rather supplement them.

The success of the Law Enforcement Explorer Program is apparent by its continued growth. Nationwide, more than 1,000 new posts have been formed during the past 10 years, and the number of Explorers grew from 32,000 in 1979 to almost 46,000 in 1989. The program has received endorsements from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), the National Sheriff's Association (NSA), the Exploring Division of the Boy Scouts of America and the Law Enforcement Explorer Executive Committee.

Regarding the Law Enforcement Exploring Program, U.S. Senator Phil Gramm notes, "Involvement in the Law Enforcement Explorer Program establishes an awareness of the complexities of criminal justice and gives Scouts a better understanding of our democratic system." In essence, Exploring provides an opportunity for young Americans to participate in criminal justice activities, after training and indoctrination, designed to enlarge their career opportunities and build mutual understanding with law enforcement agencies.

Benefits of Exploring

For the Irving, Texas, Police Department, Exploring provides an opportunity to identify potential career law enforcement personnel. Currently, the police department has three officers who are former Law Enforcement Explorers. One of these officers has been with the department for 10 years since get-

ting his start with Explorers. "Law Enforcement Exploring is a very positive influence on today's youth," this officer said. "It allows Explorers to learn about criminal justice through classroom training and practical experience."

Perhaps more important is the role an Explorer Program has in improving the agency's relationship with the community. Explorer advisors are assigned to the Community Services Section to deal specifically with crime prevention. The Explorers also get involved in the community through senior citizen centers, bicycle rodeos, day schools and many other similar programs. In addition, Neighborhood Watch Programs enable the Explorers to meet personally with residents of the community and to explain Operation I.D. or such crime prevention measures as the difference between a single cylinder and a double cylinder dead-bolt lock.

Explorers enable the department to maintain effective use of officer manpower. The police department uses Explorers to help with the filing, statistical work, and inventories. Explorers also participate in child fingerprinting days at a local shopping mall. Involving the Explorers also allows the department to demonstrate the desirable practices and attitudes of a successful law enforcement agency, thus building respect for the department and improving its overall image.

Benefits to Youth

For a young adult, Exploring can set a career path and provide a better understanding of the criminal justice system. It can also build character, increase mental and physical fitness, improve self-esteem, and provide a better understanding of a young person's role as a citizen. "With the training, guidance and understanding I needed as a young adult, Exploring

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Steve Farish is the President of the Texas Law Enforcement Explorer Advisor's Association and an Irving, Texas, police officer.





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helped make up my mind that law enforcement would be my career choice,” said one police officer who was an Explorer for 4 years before joining the Irving Police Department.

Starting a Program

The first prerequisite for a department considering a Law Enforcement Exploring Post is a commitment to America's youth and to the BSA's goals of character building, citizenship and mental and physical fitness. To receive its post charter from the BSA, the police department must agree to provide an Explorer advisor to work directly with the post members and provide a post committee of at least four members to function as a support team. The department is also responsible for providing a meeting place for the post, training and consultants as needed, and abiding by the principles and policies of the BSA in all Explorer activities.

In return, the local scout council agrees to assist in organizing the post, train the adult leaders, offer support services as needed and the names of potential recruits, and provide liability insurance protection for the post's leaders and the police department. The scout council also makes available literature and program materials, council-owned scout camps and other facilities, and district and council Exploring events, such as road rallies, Explorer Olympics and Law Enforcement Exploring conferences.

The Irving Police Department Post was first chartered in October 1971. “I approached the Boy Scouts for more information on the Exploring program after reading about a post in Dallas,” said the Assistant Chief of Police of the Technical Services Bureau, who subsequently became the Explorer advisor. For the introductory meeting, called a “first-nighter,” 28 young people at-

tended and were told that the post, by providing direct contact with the police department, gives Explorers an opportunity to learn about the law.

Proficiency Awards and Explorer Motivation

Once an Explorer Program is established, an ongoing challenge is to keep the young people's interest. In February 1985, advisors for the Carrollton, Texas, Police Department and the Irving Police Department developed an incentive awards program for both posts to motivate the Explorers and to recognize their accomplishments. This program was also introduced and adopted by other police departments in the area.

The Irving and Carrollton incentive program became a major part of the National Law Enforcement Explorer Proficiency Awards Program now offered by BSA to Law Enforcement Explorers. The program provides an opportunity

for posts and their Explorers to earn a series of recognition awards that incorporate their Law Enforcement Exploring experience, such as community service, crime prevention, law enforcement training, firearms training, emergency preparedness, and drug abuse prevention.

Within the Irving post, the award program motivates Explorers to become more involved in a "total police work" concept. "When Explorers join the post, their idea of police work is riding around in a squad car writing tickets and making arrests," according to the police department's associate advisor. "The proficiency awards help motivate the kids to participate in all aspects of police work."

Explorer Training

Training consumes a tremendous amount of an Explorer's time and energy. Most of the regularly scheduled meetings (first and third Tuesday nights of each month) are spent learning about different law enforcement techniques and the responsibilities of police work. To become eligible for the Ride-Along Program, proficiency awards or local and national Law Enforcement Explorer competitions, each of the Explorers must complete 30 hours of training in areas such as departmental procedure, first-aid, report writing and radio procedure.

Often, the department uses officers who are not Explorer advisors to teach the classes, which provides an opportunity for them to interact with the Explorers. However, the department also arranges for guest speakers from Federal agencies, juvenile courts, detention centers or

other criminal justice agencies to add variety to the training program.

Training for Law Enforcement Officers

The Boy Scouts of America, through the Exploring Division, offers a Law Enforcement Exploring Advisors' Workshop to help advisors become more at ease with their responsibilities and to understand their role in Exploring. Each of the Irving Police Department's advisors has attended the 3-day workshop, which includes training in Explorer leadership, recruiting, policy and procedure, working with the BSA, community relations, money earning, motivation, identifying and solving problems, firearms safety programs, training academies and many other topics.

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There are also area-wide workshops to help advisors run their posts effectively. These workshops offer information about other available local, State and national programs and help to solve problems common to other posts through group discussions. All workshops are conducted by BSA personnel and Explorer advisors from departments around the country.

In an effort to offer additional training and to create a positive link between the youth and patrol officers, the police department also offers a 3-hour Officers' Explorer Training class. This class provides an overview of the Exploring Program and is mandatory for those who want to participate in the Explorer Ride-Along program. Explorer standard operating procedures (SOP) are also taught to the officers to inform them of the Explorer's role and duties when accompanying the officer on patrol or when working at the station. These restrictions ensure that the Explorer will be riding with officers who are knowledgeable about the program and who understand the guidelines that they, as well as the Explorers, must follow.

Conclusion

Involvement in the Law Enforcement Exploring Program has greatly benefited the Irving, Texas, Police Department by providing needed and timely manpower for special occasions and by offering a positive outreach program to the community. For the Explorer, the benefits continue throughout their lives. If Explorers choose a law enforcement career, they usually do not need as extensive a training program as employees who did not participate in the Exploring Program. But, even if the Explorer does not choose a law enforcement career, the department still will have helped a youth to become a much more productive citizen who will understand and care about the needs and concerns of law enforcement.

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