

Law Enforcement Exploring

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Is the concept of Law Enforcement Exploring one that you have never heard of, or a concept that your agency has fully embraced? Is your agency aware of this great program for youth aged 14 – 20 and taking full advantage of it? If your agency is unaware of this program I hope by the time you read this article you will be convinced that it is a program that will benefit your agency as well as the involved youth.

Law Enforcement Exploring

Nationally, over 33,000 Explorers (youth 14-20 years of age) and 8,425 adult volunteers participate in Law Enforcement Exploring. Program highlights include: the national Law Enforcement Exploring Leadership Academies and Conferences, ride-alongs, career achievement awards, and scholarship opportunities.

The purpose of Law Enforcement Exploring is to provide young adults who may be interested in a career in law enforcement with a comprehensive program of training, competition, service and practical experiences. Character development, physical fitness, good citizenship and patriotism are integral components of the overall program. Through their involvement in the program, Explorers develop an awareness of the purpose, mission and objective of law enforcement.

Law Enforcement Exploring combines classroom training with ride-alongs in police vehicles, pistol shooting, community policing as well as; the educational requirements for a career in law enforcement and they will receive tangible advice on steps they can take to prepare and position themselves for a successful career in law enforcement. Benefits Law Enforcement Exploring can provide for the youth involved are improved self-confidence, leadership experience, social networking, fun and exciting “hands on” career experiences, community service opportunities, college and career readiness preparation and team building.



Law Enforcement Exploring is part of the Boy Scouts of America and under the umbrella of Learning for Life that has reached out to high school and college age young adults.

“Learning for Life is an education program designed to meet the needs of youth and schools. It helps youth meet the challenge of growing up by teaching character and good decision-making skills and then linking those skills to the real world.” Under that definition you find the mission of Exploring which reads; “Learning for Life brings school-based learning and work-based learning together in a worksite education program called Exploring. Exploring provides experience that help young people mature and prepare them to become responsible and caring adults. Designed for young men and women ages 14 (and who have completed the eighth grade) through 20, Exploring allows young people to get hands-on experience in a career field of their choice working with professionals in that field.”

Historical Overview

The Explorer program was established in the early 1960's. The Institute of Social Research at the University of Michigan in the 1950's conducted a study on the interests and attitudes of high school age boys. The findings indicated four very basic themes:

- The primary concern of youth was what they were going to with the rest of their life, i.e. employment.
- They would enjoy participating in a program that was coed.
- They were not particularly wild about the green Explorer uniforms of the time.
- They would like to have a certain amount of say in the operation of any program in which they became involved.

During that same time in Southern California, a business man, William H. Spurgeon III, was actively involved in the local Scouting program. His primary interest was with Exploring and how it could be a benefit to young people. He didn't believe that the Boy Scouts of America was properly interpreting the University of Michigan's research data. His feelings and thoughts were that the young people wanted an opportunity for genuine "hands-on" experiences. Therefore, he developed Explorer posts in the southern California area which had a much stronger career flavor and based were the professions occurred.

His idea of Exploring was to let the professionals' share their expertise with young people and then the natural chemistry would occur and would result in fulfilling the three principles objectives of the Boy Scouts of American: character development, citizenship training and fitness. This idea took hold and the first Explorer post to be sponsored by a police department where the principle program was police work was chartered in 1961 to the Orange Police Department in Orange, California.

The Boy Scouts of America were receptive to the data from the study and in August of 1968 a new Exploring program was developed. This program included extensive career exploration, allowed for wide latitude in a uniform (or lack of), it provided adult like recognition to the members and most importantly was coed.

Exploring at the National Level

In 1970, the first National Explorer President's Congress was in convened in Washington, D.C., bring nearly 1,700 Explorers, Advisors and staff in attendance. President Nixon hosted a reception on the White House lawn which ended with the installation of the first National Explorer President. The program lasted for four days. The Law Enforcement Explorers in attendance went to the Secret Service training center in Beltsville, Maryland. The Secret Service Director at the time was James Rowley who served as the volunteer chairman for the National Explorer President's Congress and expanded the Secret Service roll in support of the program.

The National Committee continued to add influential law enforcement leaders. Stu Knight had succeeded Jim Rowley at the Secret Service and had continued the tradition of involvement at the Explorer President's Congress and was quickly added to the committee, as was his Assistant Director for Public Affairs, Jack Warner. From the military came major General Paul Timmerberg, Commander of the Army Criminal Investigation Command (CID). Also from the Federal level were FBI Assistant Director, Richard Held and from the local level came St. Louis Police Commissioner, colonel Suzanne Hart; University City, Missouri Police chief, Colonel James Damos, active volunteer and police commission member from Los Angeles, radio and TV personality Johnny Grant. From the University Police Department came Chief Michael Shannahan of the University of Washington and from the corporate security

or private sector security came then Director of the American Society of Industrial Security (ASIS), O. P. Norton.

In early January of 1978, the Law Enforcement Committee sought approval from the National Exploring Committee to conduct a feasibility study concerning the concept of developing a national conference for the Law Enforcement Explorers. The study was chaired by Suzanne Hart and it was determined that there was sufficient interest to conduct a national conference. Michigan State University was selected to host the first conference which was scheduled for July 24 – 28, 1979. The first conference saw just fewer than 1,000 Explorers, advisors and staff in attendance for the four nights and five day event. The format for the team competition for that first conference had been developed using the program that had been adopted from the Florida Law Enforcement Explorer conference. The idea of having seminars, career exhibits, and a program for the Explorers to show off their own successes all were developed for the first conference. As a point of interest it should be noted that each successive conference has always exceeded the competition capacity.

The National Law Enforcement Conference

The National Law Enforcement Conference takes place every two years alternating locations East and West of the Mississippi River. It is conducted for five nights and four days and is normally held at a College or University. The conference consists of team competition events, special team events, individual events, seminars for Explorers and their advisers, a career fair, and then after hours there are shows and social events making it a fun packed week.

There are twelve team competitions that the Explorers prepare for throughout the year. Since the conference has always exceeded the competition capacity each team will only be allowed to participate in two team events. The Explorers do not know what event they will have to handle until they report to the team competition site and are given their assignment. So, the team competitions are not unlike an officer being on patrol and what the next call will bring. The twelve team competitions are as follows:

- Arrest and Search
- Bomb Threat Response
- Burglary in Progress
- Crime Prevention
- Crime Scene Search
- Crisis Negotiation (formerly known as Hostage Negotiation)
- Domestic Crisis Intervention
- Judgment Pistol Shooting (formerly known as Shoot/Don't Shoot)
- Officer Down: Emergency First Aid
- Traffic Accident Investigation
- Traffic Stop

White Collar Crime

The two special team events are comprised of the Drill Team Competition and the Non-Emergency Vehicle Operations Course (NEVOC).

The individual competition events give the Explorer an opportunity to compete against one another are comprised of five different events. The five individual competition events are as follows;

- Police Physical Performance Testing
- Air Pistol Competition
- 9mm Pistol Competition
- Sample Written Examination
- Bike Policing Competition

In between the team and individual competitions there are number of seminars that deal with contemporary policing issues. The seminars are ninety minutes in length and are delivered twice a day for the three days of actual completion. The seminars could be one on protective operations delivered by the U. S. Secret Service, social media delivered by the FLETC, or it may be the Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) providing a seminar on post blast investigations, just an example of the many Federal, state and local law enforcement agencies involved with Law Enforcement Exploring. There are usually ten different seminars available throughout the day with five presented in the morning and five different ones presented in the afternoon. The seminars require no sign up and are on a first come basis and since they are conducted in a lecture hall, seating is not a problem.

The FLETC Involvement

In 1984, the FLETC Director Charles Rinkevich was contacted by Mr. Brian Archimbaud the National Director for Exploring, who invited the FLETC to participate in the Law Enforcement Exploring program. Rinkevich was convinced that it was a good thing for the FLETC to do and accepted the invitation. As a result of this invitation Rinkevich was asked to be the chairman of the 1988 Law Enforcement Explorers Conference to be held at Boston University in Massachusetts.

When asked why the FLETC and other Federal Agencies were involved with the Explorers, he responded that the agencies brought so many resources to the table and it was a good investment of time. He further stated that for the FLETC it was a good recruiting tool for the Federal agencies that were partnered with the FLETC. The FLETC provides instructors to operate the judgment pistol shooting competition along with grading many of the other exercises. The Explorer competition provided the instructors an opportunity to do other things coupled with a broad scope to help recruit. Along with the instructors the FLETC provided video and PAO (public affairs) support by providing the conference with a promotional video and also provided video and still photography during the actual conference.

“The FLETC always received positive feedback for the Department of Treasury about our involvement in the Explorers Conference,” said Rinkevich. “In the 1980s we were able to work with Congress to pass legislation that gave the FLETC the authority to spend monies for community training which allowed the FLETC to stay involved with the Explorers.”

The current Director of the FLETC, Connie Patrick, has continued to support the Law Enforcement Exploring program. “There has been a long history of support for this program dating back to the days when the FLETC fell under the Department of Treasury,” explained Patrick. “At that time it was the Department of Treasury’s opinion that law enforcement agencies had a responsibility to support the young men and women involved in the Law Enforcement Exploring program. The purpose of this support was one of mentoring, advising and a valuable source of recruiting qualified people.”

Patrick said that this philosophy has not changed. “The FLETC and our partners are concerned with being able to recruit the brightest and best of the best. It is important that the FLETC is able to join forces and partner with all of the DHS components in making federal law enforcement the first choice of employment. This only makes sense and it is the right thing to do, it is just a good tax payer investment.”

When speaking with Director Patrick on this subject you soon learn that she is very passionate about the FLETC’s continued involvement. “It is so important to play a role in inspiring and creating a positive influence on young people. In fact, it is our responsibility to pass on our knowledge to the next generation.”

Patrick was responsible for working with Learning for Life to rewrite all of the lesson plans for the team competitions. In 2001 – 2002, these lesson plans were shared on the Learning for Life making it possible that regardless of the size of the law enforcement agency/Explorer Post everyone would have the same opportunity for success during competition at the National Conference.

“Our instructors want to be involved in the Explorers development,” explained Patrick. “We have an expertise in training, our instructors are seasoned professionals and our standards of training are current and consistent. It is like professional parenting, our instructors are willing to give back by training and shaping the mindset of these young people. We want to continue to develop these young people because they are the future of law enforcement.”

Director Patrick’s closing statement that she truly felt that we have a responsibility to the law enforcement community. And, “wouldn’t you want your son or daughter to be trained by the best?”

Conclusion

The Law Enforcement Explorers program is a very viable program for any law enforcement agency looking to recruit the brightest and the best of the best. You have trained them and seem them in action. Wouldn’t you want them as part of your team? 🌟