

## ***LAW ENFORCEMENT EXPLORING: THE FUTURE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT***

Law enforcement Explorer Posts have become a tremendous resource for law enforcement agencies of all sizes. Explorer Posts help guide the youth of their community, recruit new officers, and provide volunteer services for law enforcement agency. Learning for Life, a national organization and subsidiary of Boy Scouts of America, works to “enable young people to become responsible individuals by teaching positive character traits, career development, leadership, and life skills so they can make ethical choices and achieve their full potential.” Law Enforcement Exploring is one of 12 national programs that Learning for Life supports. Learning for Life also provides Explorer programs with comprehensive general liability insurance to Explorers.

Generally, law enforcement Explorers are between 14 and 21 years of age and can be male or female. Explorers gain hands-on experience of what a career in law enforcement would be like. Explorers often assist at community events, ride along with officers, and help with various units within the department. Explorers hone their skills with training and tests on physical fitness, firearms, radio controls, felony stops, DUI Stops, vehicle searches, building searches, and more. Explorers can test their skills at local, regional, state, and national Explorer Competitions. At the bi-annual National Law Enforcement Conference, Explorers compete as individuals and as teams. They also have the



opportunity to visit the career fair, hosted by the International Association of Chiefs of Police, to explore a variety of careers in law enforcement.

This issue of VIPS in Focus highlights the law enforcement Explorer Posts of the Lafourche Parish, Louisiana, Sheriff’s Office; the Brookings, South Dakota, Police Department; and the Long Beach, California, Police Department. Each of these agencies, using the resources established by the Learning for Life Council, have set their own policies, procedures, and activities to best prepare their Explorers to be the future of law enforcement for their communities.

### ***Lafourche Parish, Louisiana, Sheriff’s Office***

Lafourche Parish is situated in southeastern Louisiana along the Gulf of Mississippi. Its county seat, Thibodaux, is situated 67 miles west of New Orleans, Louisiana, and 200 miles east of the Texas/Louisiana border. Known for its outdoor sporting activities, Lafourche Parish is also home to oil production, ship building, and commercial fishing companies. The Sheriff’s Office (LPSO) maintains approximately 350 paid employees and 125 volunteers who provide law enforcement services to the 93,000 people in the parish.

### *Satisfaction of Helping Others*

LPSO volunteers are comprised of three levels of reserve deputies who serve in every section of the department and an Explorer Post of 35 youth aged 14 to 21. The volunteers of LPSO contributed more than 4,500 hours of service to the department in 2008. Reserves assist sworn deputies with mounted, motorcycle, water, and bicycle patrols; range safety; hunter's education; and in the parish detention center. The Law Enforcement Explorers of Post 323 receive training to assist the department in traffic control, fingerprinting, first aid and CPR, community relations, and building searches. Explorers also receive instruction in firearms safety, narcotics laws, accident investigation, hostage negotiations, and defensive tactics.

LPSO recruits youth to the Explorer program through presentations to school and summer camp groups. Explorers sometimes also get involved through their relationship with an existing Explorer or member of LPSO. The

guidelines for the Explorer Post state that members must maintain good school participation and have parental consent. Youth must not have any record of delinquent acts on file with the courts and school resource officers keep an eye on Explorers during school hours.

LPSO has acquired a sponsor to pay for the annual dues of each Explorer. The cost of uniforms is covered by the department with the help of donations. Members must abide by policies that cover conduct, attendance, and drug use. Explorers are organized into the following command structure: sheriff, Explorer advisor (employee of LPSO), Explorer

committee member, Explorer captain, Explorer lieutenant, Explorer sergeant, and Explorer.

### *Preparing New Recruits*

New Explorers attend a 74-hour training academy held during the summer with seasoned Explorers providing invaluable assistance to the LPSO staff hosting the academy. Each day of the academy begins with the recitation of the pledge of allegiance and the LPSO Explorer creed and motto. Each session is taught by a member of the department. After session and meal breaks and at the conclusion of each day, Explorers perform physical fitness exercises. The two-week academy concludes with a uniform



inspection by a seasoned Explorer and a completion ceremony. New Explorers serve a three month probationary period and at the conclusion the Board of Directors and Explorer senior staff make the determination if the Explorer is ready to serve LPSO as support personnel. The Board of Directors is comprised of the Sheriff, the

Explorer advisor, and Explorer committee members. Senior staff are those Explorers who hold the rank of captain or major.

All Explorers are subject to disciplinary procedures that they are made aware of and agree to when they receive and sign their handbook. Failure to obey any policy or conduct unbecoming of an Explorer is means for disciplinary action. All accusations must be given to an advisor in writing. The advisor will present the accusation to the Board of Directors which will determine the proper disciplinary action which can include suspension or termination.

*A Presence in the Parish*

In addition to day-to-day support of LPSO, Explorers provide crowd and traffic control for community events of all sizes. Explorers are also on hand for the local Wal-Mart's Safety Day, where Explorers help with child ID kits, including photographing, fingerprinting and gathering DNA swab samples from the child, and demonstrating the safe way to use child safety seats. Explorers have guidelines that allow them to participate in parades around the parish, usually riding with a deputy in a LPSO vehicle. With parental permission, Explorers may be on call 24 hours a day to provide extra eyes and ears to LPSO.

*Meritorious Service*

In late summer 2005, back-to-back hurricanes Katrina and Rita made landfall in Louisiana. A combined 160,000 people lost power during those storms and roughly 1,600 Louisiana residents lost their lives. While LPSO deputies and reserves were hard at work to ensure the safety and security of their parish, Explorers came to the rescue of their own neighborhoods. With the training and skills gained through the Explorer Post, Explorers were able to remove debris from yards and homes, secure their neighborhoods, and ease their neighbors. Two of the Explorers each contributed 80 hours of service following Katrina. The skills of the Explorers came in handy again for hurricanes Gustave and Ike in 2008.

LPSO Explorers are eligible to receive award ribbons for effort and service. Awards are given to the Explorer of the Year, for 100 hours of assistance provided or community service, for proficiencies in specific areas of training, for service during a hurricane, for attending the National Conference on Law Enforcement Exploring, and for years of service. Although young people may remain Explorers until their 21st birthday, in Louisiana, adults can become

an officer of the law at the age of 18. This allows for an easy transition from Explorer to deputy for LPSO Explorers. Many Explorers have continued with a career in law enforcement with LPSO and other surrounding agencies.

***Brookings, South Dakota,  
Police Department***

Brookings, South Dakota began as a railroad stop in 1879 and has grown to become the fifth largest city in the state with nearly 20,000 residents (as well as 12,500 college students). Home to South Dakota State University, Brookings is also the county seat of 800 square mile Brookings County. Located along Interstate 29, Brookings is between Fargo, North Dakota, 190 miles to the north, and Omaha, Nebraska, 230 miles to the south. Brookings is home to the large manufacturing companies of 3M, Daktronics, Larson, and Rainbow Play Systems. The Brookings Police Department has 28 officers, seven communications officers that host dispatch services for the police department and the local sheriff's office, two civilians, 10 reserves, and six Explorers.

*Supplemental Support*

State certified reserve officers have been assisting the department since 1968. The department's reserve officer coordinator and Explorer advisor were reserves before becoming full time officers with the city. Reserves provide extra man power for crowd and traffic control at the many celebrations and festivals held throughout the year. Reserves also provide security for regular events held at the local arena in exchange for a donation to the department.

To be a Brookings Police Explorer, youth must be 14 years old and have completed eighth grade. They can remain Explorers until their 21st birthday. To recruit Explorers, the Explorer advisor works with the department's school resource officer to inform students of the opportunity to become an Explorer, makes presentations to community groups, and relies on the word of mouth from Explorers. The Explorer program counts on fundraisers and donations to sustain their budget.

### *Program Administration*

Monthly meeting attendance is mandatory for Explorers. There they learn about such topics as policies and procedures of the program and the department, first aid, CPR, and becoming familiar with patrol cars.

Explorers must also go on one ride along a month and have responded with officers to bar fights, domestic violence calls, and traffic stops.



Explorers must volunteer a minimum of five hours per month with meetings and ride alongs counting toward that requirement. Other opportunities for meeting their hours include providing assistance at community events, and completing a train-the-trainer course for search and rescue. These individuals can then sign up for the next Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training held in the county. While this Explorer program does not currently compete in competitions, they have enough to keep them busy and engaged all year round. The Explorers all have a vested interest in public safety and are excited to learn as much as they can.

The department maintains high expectations for its Explorers. They must wear their short sleeve button down uniform shirt for all events, maintain a 2.0 GPA in school, and have

the support of their family to be involved. The Explorer advisor stresses that conduct is important everywhere, not just when in uniform, and with the help of the SRO is able to keep tabs on the Explorers. If a conduct issue or policy violation arises the discipline process begins with a written reprimand with the hopes that it will be rectified at that point.

### *Complimentary Units*

Former Brookings Explorers have gone on begin careers in law enforcement to , while others become reserves. The department relies heavily on both the reserves and Explorers to support the day-to-day operations of the department. The department has maintained the same number of sworn officer positions since the Chief joined the department in 1981, while the city's population has grown nearly 20 percent.

### *Long Beach, California, Search & Rescue*

Long Beach, California, is also known as the International City for its highly diverse population. Located 20 miles south of Los Angeles along the Pacific Coast, Long Beach is home to 480,000 people and is one of the world's largest shipping ports. The mild climate and variety of attractions draw visitors from around the world. The Long Beach Police Department protects the city with 1,000 sworn officers, 500 civilian employees, and nearly 300 volunteers. Volunteer programs include interns, a civilian volunteer program, senior police partners, mounted police, Neighborhood Watch advisory groups, and two Explorer Posts.

### *Engaging Youth*

Law Enforcement Explorer Post #295 is for youth ages 14 to 20. Training in all areas of law

enforcement is provided to Explorers. The 30 Explorers in this Post meet weekly to discuss patrol procedures, communications, department regulations, criminal law, report writing, and the fundamentals of police field work. Explorers are on hand to help with local safety fairs, fingerprinting events, traffic control, fundraising, marathons, and public service. Explorer Post #295 is managed by the Youth Services Division of the police department.

Long Beach Search and Rescue, Specialist Explorer Post #279 (LBS&R) is cosponsored by the Long Beach Police Motor Patrol and Long Beach Firefighters Associations. LBS&R currently has approximately 100 volunteers comprised of about 50 Explorers, 20 staff instructors, and representatives from police and fire agencies serving as advisors. In 2008, LBS&R Explorers volunteered 20,255 hours assisting with emergency response and community service efforts for the city of Long Beach.

### *Building Interest*

Each September, LBS&R makes presentations to area high schools to recruit members. Applicants must be between the ages of 15 and 18, have no serious police record, and maintain a "C" grade average in school. Recruits must also be in good physical condition, willing to devote their time, and fulfill aptitude requirements. In October, LBS&R holds an open orientation for interested youth and their parents. Interested youth are invited to return the following week to undergo a physical agility exam and oral interview. This examination evening is only offered once a year. Applicants bring a completed application as well as an emergency treatment consent form and orientation letter signed by a parent. The agility test includes a half mile run, hose pull, dummy drag, stair climb, and hoisting exercise. Oral interviews are given by advisors and staff members who rate applicants on judgment, poise, interest, and availability, among other things. Applicants are notified of acceptance by

mail within 48 hours of their exams and begin their recruit training the following week.

### *Accountability*

LBS&R has a board of directors and is governed by a constitution and by-laws. The by-laws outline the uniform requirements of advisors, staff members, and youth members at different events. The by-laws also dictate the position of uniform accessories and patches and personal appearance of members. Uniforms are supplied by the individual. Members are issued City of Long Beach Photo Identification cards, helmets, and a locker. Disciplinary procedures outlined in the by-laws are acted upon by the board of directors. Disciplinary action may include a written or verbal warning, probation, suspension, emergency suspension, or dismissal.



### *Hands-On Training*

LBS&R recruit members are on probation during the 18-week, 92-hour academy training. Taught by staff and advisors, recruits learn about search and rescue topics such as ropes and knots, radio communications, traffic control, search operations, ladders, patient packaging, fire suppression, first aid, rescue tools and emergency lighting. Training is held at LBS&R's facility on the grounds of the Long Beach Fire Department's Training Center. Recruits who successfully complete the training academy become crew members.

LBS&R meets weekly on Tuesdays for three hours for continual training including basic, light, and medium urban search and rescue techniques, ground search training; and agency specific training. Occasionally three hours is not sufficient to cover a training topic and weekend hours are necessary to complete the training. Additionally, members can participate in a 40-hour urban rescue course that takes place over the summer. In 2007 LBS&R was certified by the California State Office of Emergency Services to respond to mutual aid requests throughout the state during large-scale disasters. Explorers also register as state disaster service workers, making them eligible to receive workers' compensation and medical compensation benefits if they are injured during disaster response.

#### *The Call of Duty*

LBS&R members are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week to assist with emergencies in the city. Members have responded to missing person and evidence searches, major fires, SWAT team responses, aircraft accidents, HAZMAT spills, mass casualty incidents, earthquake response, major crime scenes, body recoveries, neighborhood evacuations, command post operations, sobriety checkpoints, and as first aid teams at community events. LBS&R maintains nine emergency response vehicles, with light and medium rescue trucks outfitted to US&R standards. A rehab vehicle provides first responders with food, water, medical monitoring, and a misting station during extended events. LBS&R quartermasters are in charge of the equipment and vehicles.

#### *Reaping the Benefits*

LBS&R has been called out more than 500 times in its 46-year history, averaging 12 emergency responses a year. Advisors feel part of the program's success is due to the fact

that many LBS&R Explorers who begin careers in emergency services return to serve as mentors. LBS&R members over the age of 18 can become staff instructors and many have made the transition from staff member to full-time first responder with area agencies. To date, 26 LBS&R members have been hired by the Long Beach Police Department, 39 members by the Long Beach Fire Department, 12 members by the Los Angeles Fire Department, and other members have gone to careers at more than 60 other law enforcement, fire, or rescue agencies.

#### *For Additional Information*

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## VIPS Resources & Products of Interest

### VIPS Program Directory

Law enforcement agencies can register their Explorer programs and search for Explorer programs with the online VIPS program directory. Citizens can locate volunteer opportunities with law enforcement agencies in their communities. The directory allows users to search by zip code, state, key word, and type of program.

### Advancing an Existing Law Enforcement Volunteer Program

After establishing a law enforcement volunteer program, many coordinators find themselves asking, "What's next?" This training works to answer that question by providing information about volunteer management issues, advocacy and sustainability, innovative ideas, personnel issues, engaging youth, public health crises, recognition, and funding. By expanding the vision of a program coordinator, the volunteer program will have the potential to grow and succeed.

### VIPS Resource Library

Browse and download sample documents from law enforcement volunteer programs, such as Explorer program descriptions, position descriptions, and policy and procedures for Explorer programs.

### Educational Video Series

*Engaging Youth through Volunteerism* explains how youth and adult volunteers in law enforcement agencies can engage youths in their community. This video can be shown during presentations to youth to encourage their involvement.

All resources and products can be found at [www.policevolunteers.org](http://www.policevolunteers.org).

The Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS) Program works to enhance the capacity of state and local law enforcement to utilize volunteers. VIPS serves as a gateway to resources and information for and about law enforcement volunteer programs. VIPS is a Program Partner of Citizen Corps, an initiative helping to make communities across America safer, stronger, and better prepared for emergencies of all kinds. The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) manages and implements the VIPS Program in partnership with and on behalf of the Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice.



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