

LAPD's Transit Group Explorers Are Looking For a Few Good Kids

By ERIC RAPP

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your kids always thought it would be cool to be a cop? With the LAPD Explorers, they have a

chance to try it out while helping in their community and without experiencing any of the danger that police normally face.



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The Explorer program is intended to educate and involve youths in police operations. The program specifically targets young men and women who are considering a career in law enforcement, but anyone aged 14 to 21 who meets the requirements can join.

Explorers must attend and pass Explorer Academy, a 12-week training course held on Saturdays that teaches many of the same basics new police recruits learn. Explorer training can greatly help prepare a young person for a career in law enforcement.

Currently, there are more than 850 Explorers throughout the LAPD. Explorers are kept away from the hazardous aspects of police work.

Joined to get experience

"I joined for the law enforcement experience," says Explorer David Bernal. David's mother works at Venice Division 6.

The Transit Group's Explorers undergo the same training as most police Explorers, but work specifically with Transit Group.

The Transit Group Explorer program started in February 2001 with 15 Explorers. Currently there are 31 Explorers in the Transit Group, 21 of whom are dependents or relatives of MTA employees. Youth Service Officer Maury Winet hopes to enlarge the Transit Group to more than 50 Explorers.

Recently, the Transit Group Explorers provided security and traffic control for the MTA Car Show and the Malibu Chili Cook-Off, and will be helping with the Los Angeles Marathon on March 3rd.

Explorers sometimes get to perform community service. Last Christmas they worked at an event sponsored by radio station Arrow 93 and the Make-A-Wish Foundation. The Explorers helped organize lines and took pictures of children with Santa Claus.

Help with day-to-day tasks

Transit Group Explorers also assist with the day-to-day operation of the Police Department, helping with administrative tasks.

"The goal is for the program to be youth-run, with oversight from myself and my colleague, Officer Connie Guerrero," says Winet. Recently two Transit Explorers were promoted to the rank of sergeant. With the expansion of the program, new ranks, including captain and lieutenant, will be added.

The next Explorer Academy class starts in June 2002. But any MTA dependents or relatives who are interested shouldn't wait until then to get information.

Anyone interested in the program can contact the Youth Service Officers who oversee the Transit Group Explorers. Officer Winet can be reached at 922-3546, or contact Officer Guerrero at 922-3626.

[Back to Bulletin Board](#)