

Law and Order

- **Sheriff's Explorer Program gives youth experience in law enforcement.**

By LISA HUYNH

(October 17, 2002) Many children want to become cops when they grow up – now they have an opportunity to get involved in law enforcement.

The Los Angeles Sheriff's Department Metro Sheriff Explorer program began its 18-week academy in September.

The Sheriff Explorer program, which has been a part of the Boy Scouts of American since 1968, allows boys and girl and young adults to get a first hand look at what law enforcement actually does.

Upon completion of the program, explorers assist the MTA by handing out safety brochures and discussing safety procedures at special events.

Senior Deputy Gary De Bondt is the coordinator of the Metro Sheriff Explorers program.

"I was a deputy explorer myself back in 1973," says De Bondt. "I always felt that I should give back what was given to me."

A realistic experience

Eric Bloom, who was a deputy explorer years back, now works as a civilian volunteer and runs the program. "The explorers go through a condensed, modified version of what real deputies go through," says Bloom.

Explorers meet every Saturday for 18 weeks, to learn the fundamentals of law enforcement and basic police science. They learn arrest techniques, first aid and CPR. The explorers also go through physical training.

De Bondt says in order to graduate from the academy, which is held in Whittier, explorers must pass both the academic and physical portion of the program.

"The purpose of the program is to build self-discipline and character," says De Bondt.

Although only two percent of explorers go into law enforcement, De Bondt says, "These explorers don't regret going though the program because it helps them become better citizens and it gives them a better appreciation and understanding of law enforcement."

Once an explorer has completed the academy, he or she receives a



Metro Sheriff's Deputy Explorer's front row, from left: Danny Ramirez, De Andre Pugh, Miguel Barajas; Second row: Adrian Avila, Johnny Gallardo and Daniel Castro; Back row: Explorer Advisor Deputy Henry Saenz and Explorer Coordinator Senior Deputy Gary De Bondt. PHOTO:

LISA HUYNH

graduation, diploma, patches, and a badge and may earn 10 high school units or three college units.

Community outreach programs

After graduation, explorers continue to go through training programs, such as patrol procedures, community outreach and crime prevention.

In order to qualify, explorers need to be between the ages of 14 and 21, have at least a 2.0 GPA and have no felonies.

The explorers are set to graduate in January and the next academy will begin in February 2003.

To join the Sheriff Explorers program, candidates may either contact a local Sheriff's station or apply online at www.lasdreserve.org

The Sheriff's Department is also seeking volunteers for the Metro Reserve Deputy and Civilian Volunteer programs. Volunteers need to be at least 21 years old.

"I encourage all MTA employees to allow their children to join the Metro Explorers program," says De Bondt.

[Back to Bulletin Board](#)