

# L.A. SHERIFFS' MUSEUM

By Chris Miller

Los Angeles Sheriffs' Museum

## HISTORY OF THE LASD DEPUTY EXPLORER PROGRAM, PART 3

Over time, responsibilities change. When the Explorer Program first started, one of the primary duties was fingerprinting citizens applying for jobs. Ink was used to roll the prints onto cards, but once the LiveScan machine was introduced, special training and certification meant the Explorers were no longer needed. Children, however, are still fingerprinted by Explorers. The card is given to the parents, so if their child is ever kidnapped or missing, they will have a record of the fingerprints.

When headline news and TV crime dramas reported that children were being kidnapped while innocently riding bicycles, fewer and fewer parents allowed their children to ride bikes. The number of young cyclists dwindled to the point that the job of licensing bicycles, once a staple of Explorer duties, was no longer necessary.

For years, the only volunteers for the Sheriff's Department were reserve deputies and Explorers. The Explorers helped in many areas including the front desk where they answered phones and handled counter traffic. However, when the Civilian Volunteer Program was created, the teens were replaced by the older, more experienced adults.

## CHANGES TO THE APPLICANT REQUIREMENTS

To qualify for the Explorer Program, each candidate must have at least a C grade point average or higher if attending school, be of good moral character and pass a background check. They are also required to pass an oral interview to ensure

they can speak logically and will represent the Sheriff's Department in a positive way. With the exception of height and weight, Explorer applicants must meet the same basic physical requirements as a deputy sheriff applicant. In addition, they need to pass a medical examination to ensure they are healthy enough to endure the stringent physical training of the Explorer Academy.

Recruits must maintain a GPA of 70 percent in their regular school work as well as all Academy subjects, including academics, physical training, defensive tactics, first aid, CPR, leadership and career development, practical application exercises and much more. They have to purchase their own uniforms and physical training gear and adhere to required grooming standards.

## IMPROVED TRAINING

The Explorer Academy training has been updated over the years to keep pace with changes in society and the environment, as well as the numerous obstacles facing teenagers. Recruits are required to pass a radio code and spelling test each week, and take copious notes during lectures, neatly rewriting them in an outline format. These notes are collected into a notebook, which is submitted to their staff instructor for review and grading. Each recruit is responsible for writing a paper on a current topic relating to law enforcement, as well as one on the definition of the motivational word of the week. Each assignment is graded and counts toward their overall grade point average. If a test is missed, it can be made up during the lunch hour. In order to help

all recruits succeed, the staff makes themselves available during normal Academy training hours to provide study and notetaking tips to anyone struggling with the academics.

Academic progress and grades can be tracked by the recruit, their parents or guardians, and the post advisor by accessing the Recruit Progress Reports link on the Explorer website. To prevent security breaches, each recruit is assigned a randomly selected and confidential student identification number, which allows their grade assignment list to be checked from any computer. Grades are updated before the end of each Saturday during Academy training.

## EARNING THE UNIFORM

When Explorers first start the Academy, they are required to have three forms of clothing: business attire, such as a suit, Class B uniform and physical training gear, including a T-shirt and shorts. They are taught to pay attention to grooming standards and how to keep their clothing presentable and up to code. One thing the staff wants the recruits to learn is to plan ahead and have their clothing prepared beforehand. This includes ironing and removing any stray threads.

During the first month of the Academy, recruits wear business attire. By the fourth week, most of those who were not going to continue the program have already dropped out. As they had not yet been required to purchase uniforms, their parents were not left with an unnecessary \$100 expenditure. Recruits begin wearing their Class

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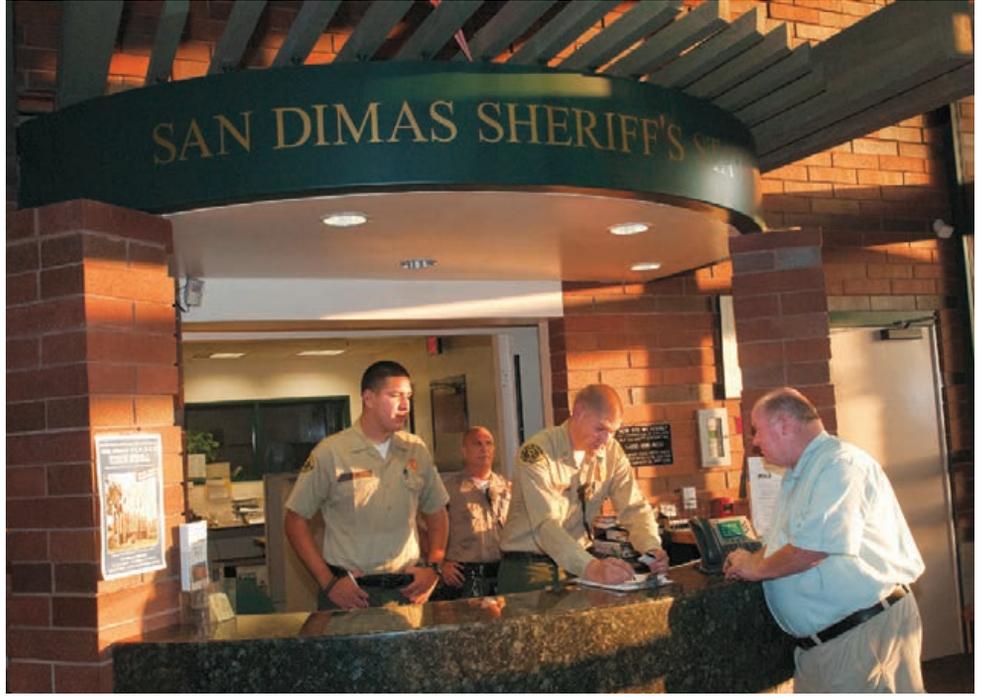
*Explorers in the classroom*



*Explorers take notes during a lecture*



*An Explorer searches for evidence*



*Explorers working the San Dimas Station front counter*



*An Explorer works the San Dimas Rodeo*



*An Explorer directs traffic at the San Dimas Rodeo.*



*A staff instructor inspects a female Explorer cadet.*



*A staff instructor inspects Explorers.*

B uniforms during the fourth week. It includes a clear plastic nametag holder with their name written on a piece of white paper. Shoulder patches and a cloth badge would be added later. If the class makes too many mistakes, they have to go back to wearing business attire. Once they get their act together, they are allowed to change back into their uniforms. After the midterm exams and a colors run, the Explorers earn their shoulder patches and cloth badge.

## EXPLORER LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

The LASD Explorer Leadership Institute (ELI) is a program designed to enhance the skills of those holding positions of rank within their posts and to prepare them for staff positions at the Explorer Academy. This five-day program is held at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, where participants live in military housing units and eat at the mess hall. During the training, leadership and organizational classes are held, along with other activities and presentations. Due to limited space and funding, only 20 to 25 hand-selected Explorers are eligible to attend ELI.

Before Sergeant Roller took charge of the Explorer Program in 2012, the deputies in charge of ELI would just transport the Explorers to Camp Pendleton where the Marines would train them. When the Marines ran out of things to talk about, they would either place the Explorers in formation and yell at them until they cried or involve them in physical training two or three times a day. Roller didn't see this as accomplishing the goals of ELI, so he restructured the curriculum. Instead of wasting their time, Explorers were now taught concepts about leadership, behavior, mentoring others, managing meetings, and creating interesting and informative presentations. They also learned how to assist their post advisor at the station. Textbooks were created and, instead of just lectures, more interaction between the staff and students was encouraged. Explorers became active participants in their education and



An Explorer on a patrol ride-along

training, which was now conducted by deputy sheriffs, not Marines.

Physical training was relegated to just a segment of the day where fitness was presented in a manner the teens could use for the rest of their lives. Explorers who pass the program are eligible to wear the distinctive ELI pin on their uniform, along with a rocker shoulder patch.

## BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

On June 28, 2000, when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Boy Scouts of America had the constitutional right to exclude homosexuals from being scout leaders, LAPD withdrew their Explorer program from the Boy Scouts. Since the name "Explorer" was trademarked by the Boy Scouts, LAPD began referring to their former Explorers as cadets. The Exploring logo and manual were trademarked by the Boy Scouts and could not be used without its permission. So, for years, LAPD operated without a policy and procedures manual. Later, this omission would lead to a major scandal involving its cadet program. Sheriff Lee Baca, however, held a different view than LAPD, stating that the Boy Scouts of America had been around for a long time and was highly respected. "Even though they excluded homosexuals from their program," Baca stated, "everyone knows my position, and I'm not excluding anyone, so we are going to continue our relationship with the Boy Scouts. We are going to be open to everybody."

The City of West Hollywood, along with the City of Los Angeles, didn't want to be associated with the Boy Scouts of America. Even though West Hollywood is policed by the Sheriff's Department, it does not have any Explorers. Avalon Station on Catalina Island has had Explorers in the past, but once those teenagers grew up, there were no others to take their place. So right now, there are no Explorers on the island.

## LAPD CADET SCANDAL

After LAPD's Explorer program broke off from the Boy Scouts of America's Explorer Program in

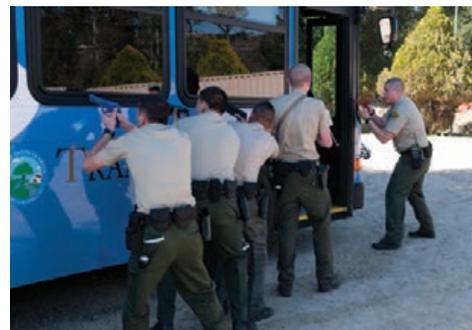
2000, it spent the next 17 years operating without a manual of policy and procedures. Station captains were encouraged to recruit more cadets, and a station with 300 officers could have just as many, if not more, cadets. Needless to say, there were not enough officers to keep track of this many kids. The station's two community relations officers supervised the cadets, but they only worked 40 hours a week, so there was no one to supervise on weekdays after hours or on the weekends.

So many cadets were hanging around the station that the officers got to know and trust them, sometimes even giving them keys to move vehicles. There were incidents where a cadet standing nearby would memorize the password as an officer logged on to a computer, thus gaining access to the department's computer system. An officer at 77th Division, who wanted to be one of the "cool guys," befriended many of the teens and became sexually involved with a 15-year-old cadet. He was in charge of checking equipment in and out, so, to dissuade the girl and other cadets from disclosing his illegal affair, he began checking out radios, Tasers and car keys to the kids. The cadets would get marked and unmarked radio cars and drive them around, even being so brazen as to drive them to school. Impersonating LAPD officers, they conducted traffic stops and confronted prostitutes.

A sergeant from 77th Division was assigning patrol vehicles for the next day and couldn't find one of the cars. Checking video footage from the station parking lot, a teenage girl could be seen driving the car in and filling it with gas. He advised all officers to be on the lookout for this car because he didn't know who was driving it. Later that night, an officer spotted the missing car sitting side-by-side with another patrol car, both of which were being driven by LAPD cadets. When the officer activated his emergency lights, the vehicles took off, with the officer in pursuit. Both vehicles crashed and the cadets were taken into custody.



An Explorer uses the radio on a patrol ride-along.



Explorers clear a bus during the North County Explorer Competition.



Explorers working the San Dimas Car Show



Explorers working the Lancaster Poppy Festival



An Explorer directs traffic at the Lancaster Poppy Festival.



An Explorer takes notes on a patrol ride-along.



Parking control at the San Dimas Rodeo

Six cadets from 77th Division and one from Pacific Division were arrested. During the investigation, the cadet program at both divisions was suspended, and Chief Charlie Beck personally arrested the officer who was sexually involved with the 15-year-old cadet.

## NEWS INVESTIGATION

After the LAPD scandal hit the news, a reporter from the *Los Angeles Times* interviewed Sergeant Roller, asking what safeguards were in place to prevent the same thing from happening with the LASD Explorer Program. Sergeant Roller showed the reporter his revised Explorer Manual and explained that, unlike LAPD's situation, where one adult was responsible for hundreds of kids, the Sheriff's Department's ideal was to have one adult supervising no more than 10 Explorers.

The reporter was given a copy of the manual, and Sergeant Roller additionally pointed out that, due to the presence of inmate workers inside the patrol stations, car keys and radios were not left lying around. The reporter went back to the LAPD commander, whom she had previously interviewed, and gave him a copy of the Sheriff's Department's manual, saying, "You may want to use this."

The L.A. City Office of Inspector General, along with command staff from LAPD, contacted Sergeant Roller several times inquiring about the Sheriff's Department's Explorer Manual, which they ultimately used as a template to create their own LAPD Cadet Manual.

After this enormous scandal, the L.A. City Fire Department realized the benefits of being part of the Boy Scouts of America and have since gone back to that program. LAPD is also negotiating to have its cadet program return to the Boy Scouts as well.

## YOUTH PROTECTION PROGRAM

Learning for Life, a youth character education program also affiliated with the Boy Scouts, provides a two-hour Youth Protection Program where adults are taught what is and is not appropriate behavior when dealing with minors. The large number of personnel on the Sheriff's Department makes it difficult to train everyone, so Sergeant Roller contacted all the patrol station captains and suggested they select 10 deputies to attend the program. These deputies would be the only ones with whom Explorers could go on ride-alongs. The Explorer advisors at each station were trained, and in turn, trained the deputies. In keeping with

the safeguards from the Youth Protection Program, Sergeant Roller periodically placed articles in the *Star News* highlighting the thousands of hours volunteered each year by deputy Explorers.

## FUTURE PLANS

Deputy Rising developed a plan for Explorers who were 18 and had graduated from high school to be hired as LASD cadets. They would be required to attend college half of the time and then work four hours a day for the Sheriff's Department in non-hazardous, minimum-wage positions. Every six months, they would be rotated to a different assignment, thus gaining exposure to a variety of jobs. By the time they were 20 1/2 and old enough to become a deputy, they would have a well-rounded knowledge of various aspects of the Department. Unfortunately, the plan was never implemented.

## SUCCESS OF THE PROGRAM

The Explorer Academy could be very stressful. Only those who really wanted it would complete the rigorous and demanding training. When they stood proudly at graduation, there was a

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tremendous sense of accomplishment. In many cases, their young lives were forever changed. Parents were impressed and strongly approved as they watched their teens learn to follow orders and be respectful to others.

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department's Deputy Explorer Program has been very successful at molding thousands of teenagers into responsible, compassionate, independent and self-confident adults. Through support and encouragement, they learn to interact with the community and hone the skills necessary to serve not only as deputy sheriffs, but in other positions as well, such as custody assistants and dispatchers. Teens can look back on their time as deputy Explorers with great pride and, regardless of what the future holds, enter adulthood with a solid foundation of experience and confidence.

*Edited by Jan Jenkins (ret. LASD). ☆*



*An Explorer works the Air Show*



*An instructor observes Explorers during the competition.*



*Explorers working the Los Angeles County Air Show at Fox Field in Lancaster*



*Explorers observe a crime scene at the North County Explorer Competition.*



*Explorers clear a building at the North County Explorer Competition.*