

Citizen Police Academy

In the last issue of The Heart Line, the topic of discussion in the Disabilities Corner was Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) programs, which train regular citizens to respond to community needs in the event of disasters and other emergencies. This month's column will focus on a similar program offered in many communities called the Citizen Police Academy (CPA).

In March, I ventured out of my safety zone and enrolled in the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government's CPA program. For a time my schedule was hectic, taking the CERT and the CPA classes simultaneously. But, I wanted to learn more about law enforcement and, through my participation, perhaps law enforcement would learn more about people with disabilities.

Citizen Police Academies are designed to foster communication and mutual understanding between civilians and police officers. The Lexington CPA course consists of 12 weekly three-hour classes, each covering a different program and service area of the Division of Police.

In the session on narcotics and vice, I learned to recognize the physical and environmental signs of drug use. I also met and had my photo taken with Anna, the drug alert dog.



Other classes introduced us to police department internal affairs, 911 communications and procedures used in building searches, traffic stops and detaining criminal suspects. I was surprised to learn that even people with disabilities must be handcuffed for safety reasons when detained, even if it interferes with their mobility.

During our CPA training, we toured the mobile crime lab, learned about firearms training systems, observed an Emergency Response Unit (ERU) demonstration and enjoyed a delicious cookout with ERU personnel.



Twice, class met at the driver training facility where we witnessed a simulated police chase. Driver instructors showed us several techniques officers use to maintain control of their vehicles during high-speed chases and we actually had the chance to ride along as passengers in a simulation. Even with my seat belt firmly in place, I had a difficult time staying vertical.

Upon completion of the class we were honored with a graduation ceremony and received plaques presented by Chief Ken Hall.

I encourage anyone interested in learning more about law enforcement techniques and procedures to register for a CPA class. To locate a Citizen Police Academy near you, visit www.citizenpoliceacademy.net.