

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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2017 SUFFOLK YOUTH PUBLIC SAFETY ACADEMY REGISTRATION UNDERWAY

SUFFOLK, VA (January 19, 2017) The Suffolk Youth Public Safety Academy, sponsored by the City of Suffolk, Suffolk Police Department and Suffolk Fire & Rescue Department, is designed to build confidence and focus on the duties of public safety personnel in the hopes of establishing respect and trust between at-risk juveniles and professionals. The Academy emphasizes mentoring, education, team building, respect, discipline, leadership, as well as community responsibility. Potential candidates must be between 13 and 17 years old.

The Academy provides an educational experience that includes hands on activities based on actual public safety duties. The friendly but structured atmosphere offers positive interaction with public safety personnel that develops an appreciation for their duties. The Academy has strict rules all students are expected to follow. Class size is limited to 18 students, enabling mentors to work with the students on a one-to-one basis.

Students must abide by established rules to include dress code, maintain passing grades, and conduct themselves in a professional and mature manner. Acts of disrespect are not tolerated and are handled by the mentors with the individual student. Students who cannot abide by the rules may be expelled. The goal of the mentors is to help students seek positive ways to handle difficult situations.

Twice a week classes will begin on Tuesday, February 28th and run through the second week of May from 3 p.m. until 7 p.m. Classes will be held at Suffolk Fire Station 6 located at 300 Kings Fork Road. A parent/student orientation will be held on February 21st in the evening with the time to be announced. A Graduation Ceremony will be held in the Suffolk City Council Chamber for students who successfully complete the course on Thursday, May 25th at 6:30 p.m.

Mentors are on site from 2 p.m. until 8 p.m. each class date to prepare the classroom, meet with students and/or parents, discuss issues and prepare the next week's agenda. Classes include a snack, meal, transportation to and from Station 6 and one or two weekend field trips. Students are required to identify, design and participate in a Community Service Project. Attendance is mandatory.

The Academy averages 40 to 50 applications with class size limited to 18 students as noted. Applicants are screened and chosen by the mentors. The applicants chosen are notified by mail if they are accepted. Mentors present at classes include a Fire Marshal and Fire Trainer, School Resource Officer and Supervisor, Family Service Detective and Western Tidewater Community Services Board Counselor.

Instructors include Police Officers, Fire Fighters, Forensics Unit, Commonwealth's Attorneys, ABC Agents, Attorney General's Office, Nightingale staff, etc. Classes include, but are not limited to, Fire Safety, Police and Community Interactions, Police SWAT, Verbal Judo, Use of Fire Extinguishers, Gangs, Police K-9, Health, Ladder Techniques, Fire Hoses, Forensics, Confined Space Training, Computer Safety, Arson Investigation, Police/Fire Ride Along, Team Building, Active School Shooter Safety,

Police Marine Patrol, Use of Ropes, a Community Service Project and a Saturday Field Trip to be set, and more.

There have been many success stories from students who successfully graduated from the program. One student came to the Academy with extreme anger management problems. He was routinely suspended at school for talking back to teachers and had discipline issues at home. The mentors regularly worked with this student to show him better options for handling his anger. At the end of the Academy this email was received from the student's mother: "I just wanted to update you on how my son has been doing. Since the Academy has ended we haven't had any problems out of him whatsoever. He has even made honor roll!!!! I cannot express the wonderful impact that the Academy has given him. I will forever be grateful for the time and efforts placed into his life. Thank you greatly."

There is no cost to participants. Applications are available from Suffolk Police School Resource Officers, the Kings Fork Public Safety Center located at 300 Kings Fork Road, and Suffolk Police Headquarters located at 111 Henley Place. Applications also may be obtained by contacting Fire Investigator Pam King at 757-514-4542, or Detective Joyce Williams at 757-514-7942. Along with the application, each applicant is required to provide a short essay in their own words of why he or she believes they should be selected for the program.

Applications must be returned to Detective Williams at Suffolk Police Headquarters or Fire Investigator King at Fire Station 6 on Kings Fork Rd. The application deadline will be February 3, 2017 at 5 p.m. The deadline may be extended based on response.

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