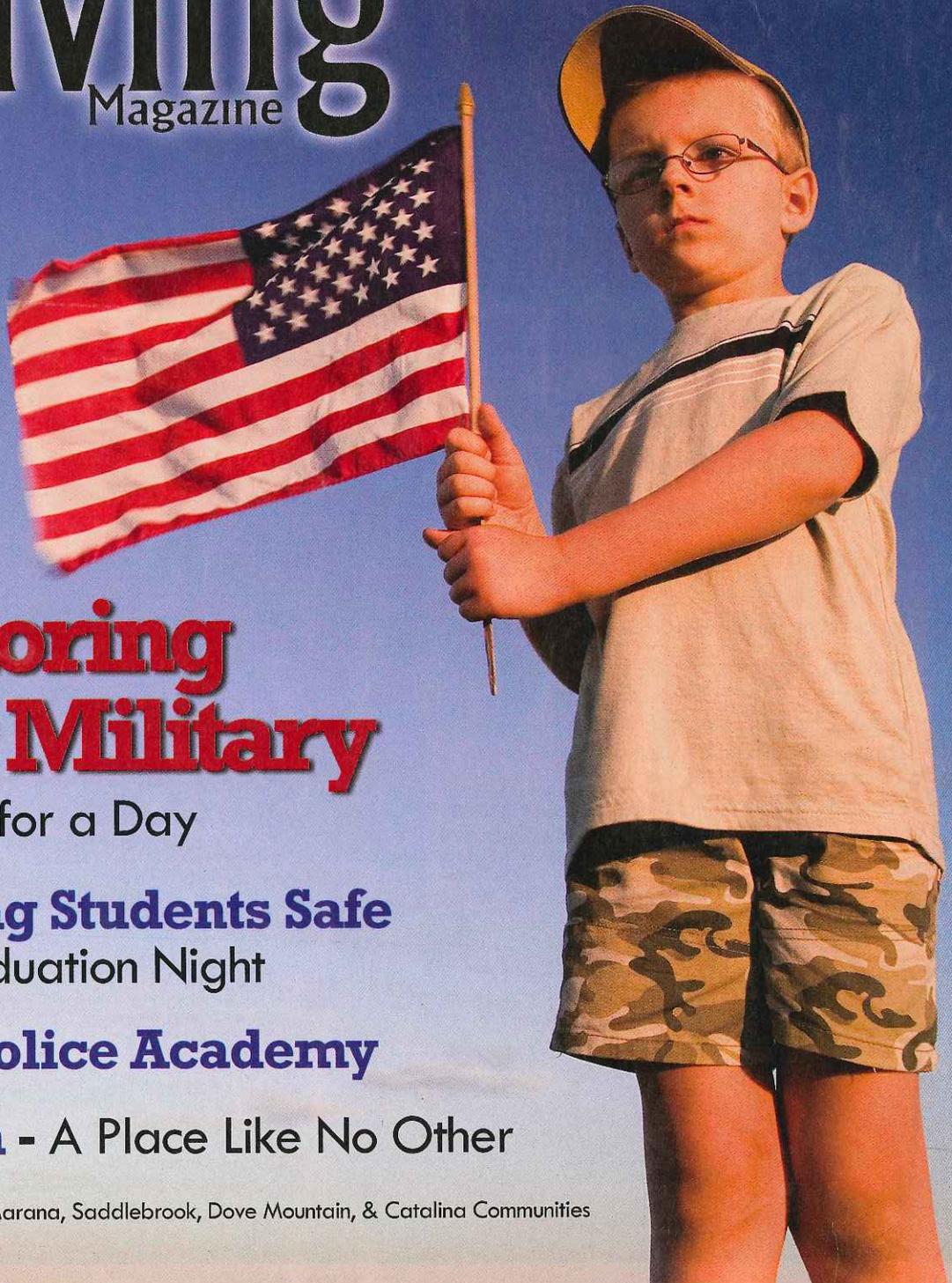


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Keeping Students Safe
On Graduation Night

Teen Police Academy

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Teen Police Academy

An Action-Packed Experience

By Korene Charnofsky Cohen

Photos courtesy of the Oro Valley Police Department

Hey, teens! This summer, you can discover how real crime-scene investigators work, see a SWAT demonstration, watch a K-9 police dog in action, and get some hands-on experience in law enforcement. Sound interesting? Check out the Oro Valley Police Department's Teen Police Academy.

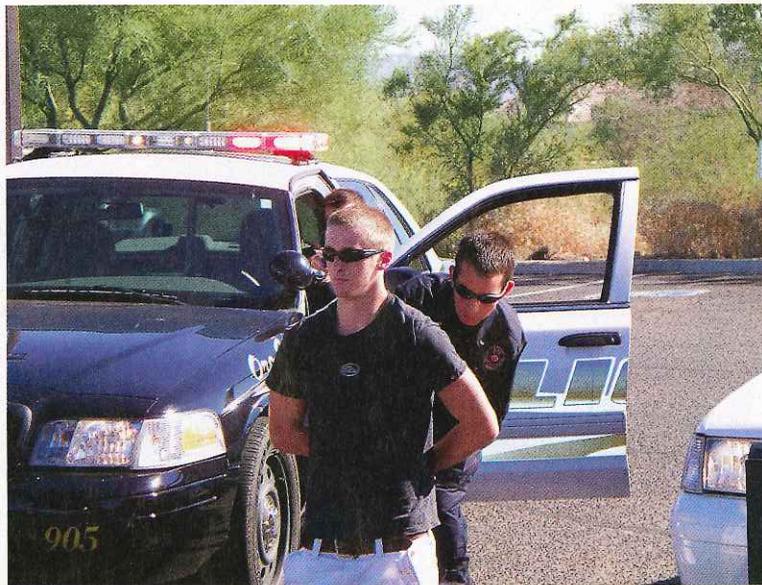
The Teen Police Academy will be held July 18-20 at the Oro Valley Police Department (OVPD) training room. The only catch is that you need to be 13 to 17 years old and a student at one of these schools: Ironwood Ridge High School, Canyon Del Oro High School, Casas Christian School, Immaculate Heart School, Pusch Ridge Academy or Cross, Wilson or Coronado Middle Schools.

Officer Jodi Brackett, OVPD training coordinator, says this program gives teens a chance to learn the what, why and how of police work.

"The students really have a great time and get a chance to get a positive image of police officers," Brackett says. "The students learn why they are important to the community, how they can become better citizens; and we learn about their questions and concerns."

The program starts out with a photo ID badge, notebook and T-shirt for each student, as well as a tour of the police department. This includes sitting in a holding cell for detained citizens, which Brackett says can be an interesting experience. All of the

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OVPD Explorers show how to handcuff a suspect.

presentations are given in an open forum, allowing for questions. There will also be opportunities to talk with officers one-on-

one. They answer many questions on topics such as alcohol and drug issues, how to say "No" to alcohol and drugs, and crime-scene investigation. Traffic laws are of interest since many of the participants have or will soon get their driver's licenses.

The program includes a trip to the gun range where students will see demonstrations of handguns, rifles, incendiary devices and a ballistic vest. Students enter a SWAT vehicle to see the equipment and learn how it is used. One officer puts on a "bite suit" to demonstrate a K-9 police dog in action.

An officer from the DUI unit discusses teen drinking and driving. Participants wear "fatal vision" goggles, which let you experience what it's like to have too much alcohol.

"Initially, the students find this experience funny," says Brackett, "but then realize the seriousness of the situation when they are required to perform a field sobriety test, attempt to take the keys out of the ignition, and discover that their vision is significantly distorted."

The program includes presentations from a school-resource officer, a patrol officer, a police dispatcher and a motorcycle officer. During the crime-prevention section, students design a neighborhood

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with crime prevention in mind. They consider crosswalks, lighting, landscaping, speed signs, schools, fire hydrants, and other elements that lead to safer neighborhoods. The OVPD Explorer group for high-school students describes the type of training they get and how they help out in the community. Their presentation includes a simulated, high-risk vehicle stop and a handcuff demonstration.

On the third day of the program, a mock crime scene is set up, complete with a dead body (a dummy, not a real cadaver!), blood spatter (corn syrup and food coloring), fingerprints and other evidence. Students form teams, put on gloves and get to work gathering evidence. They take notes and photographs, and they lift fingerprints and write a report. Each team's report is judged, and the winning team is announced at the graduation ceremony.

In addition to all of this, pizza, snacks and drinks are included in the fun! After the end of the program, the graduation ceremony includes a cake, and the mayor and chief of police announce the winners of the crime-scene investigation competition. Everyone receives a certificate.

"The students learn a lot and have fun at the same time, and many even want to repeat the program next year," says Brackett. "However, the program is so popular that we need to let others have a chance to participate."

...parents are often inspired to sign up for the department's adult version of the program...

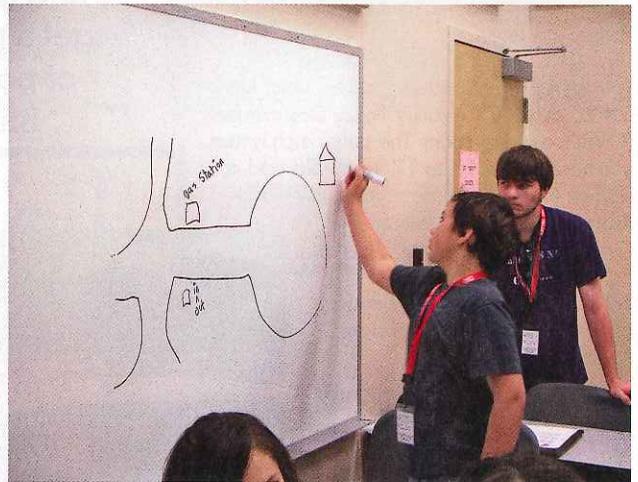
She added that the parents are often inspired to sign up for the department's adult version of the program, the OVPD Citizen Academy, a 12-week program. I can personally recommend this program since I attended it several years ago. It was professionally presented and fascinating!

Brackett advises that teens sign up for the July program as soon as possible since class space fills up quickly.

For information and to register, call Officer Jodi Brackett at (520) 229-2900



Onlookers are told not to move during the K-9 demonstration.



While designing a safer neighborhood, teens learn about graffiti and other types of criminal damage.



It's kind of creepy sitting in a jail cell, even when you've never been arrested.