

Hanover County Civic Engagement

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In Hanover County, we have had great success in using various academies and programs to reach out to all ages of citizens and get them more involved in our community. These academies are offered by our Sheriff's Office, Planning Department and Department of Community Resources.

The Hanover County Sheriff's Office began offering a Citizen's Police Academy in 1995 and over 700 individuals have successfully completed it. The 11-week program includes visual presentations, question-and-answer sessions, tours, and a variety of practical exercises. It's an effort to develop positive and productive relationships and from all accounts the academy has been a great success.

It was so successful, in fact that it led to two other academies: a Youth Academy that began in 2005 offered to high schoolers, and a Senior Citizens Academy that began in 2008. The Youth Citizen's Police Academy meets for one week in the summer and the Senior Citizens Academy, like the Citizen's Police Academy, meets once a week over 11 weeks.

Our Sheriff feels that these programs have been extremely beneficial for the Hanover County Sheriff's Office. Over 1,000 individuals have completed these academies and a majority have become volunteers in the Sheriff's various programs. The Sheriff's Motorist Assistance Program, which has been recognized with an Achievement Award by the Virginia Association of Counties, is staffed by graduates of the Citizen's Police Academy.

Our Planning Department began offering a Planning Academy in 1996 as a way of familiarizing our residents with the planning process. We believe it was the first such academy in the commonwealth when it began. Over 300 citizens have graduated from the Planning Academy, including nine who went on to become members of our Planning Commission and three who were later elected to the Board of Supervisors. We've also invited young people to serve on the Hanover Youth Partnership, giving them the opportunity to directly with local government and gain experience on development-related issues.

Another way in which we've reached out to our young people is the Hanover Youth Services Council, which consists of no more than 35 high school youth at any one time who volunteer for many service projects. We hope these young people will be the future leaders of Hanover County.

These and other direct outreach efforts have been a significant component of Hanover's civic engagement for many years now and continue to be a valued resource for involving citizens in their local government.