



EHPD is growing and changing

BY STEVE SMITH Staff Writer

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There are two sides to crime in East Hartford--the crimes that happen, and the ones that don't because EHPD is constantly finding new ways to protect its citizens.

The EHPD recently hired six new officers. Four are probationary, while finishing their training at the Connecticut Police Academy. Two others are from neighboring towns—Daniel Ortiz from Willimantic, and Christopher Vasseur from South Windsor.

Recently, the EHPD's Lt. Timothy McConville was one of 263 graduates from law enforcement offices nationwide to complete the FBI National Academy Program.

The ten-week program, consisting of advanced management, investigative, and physical training, is taught by FBI Academy instructional staff, agents and other staff, many of whom are internationally-recognized in their fields of expertise.

Designed for future leaders, the program is open only to those holding a rank of Lieutenant or above who are committed to stay in law enforcement for at least two more years.

"The program was very physical," said McConville, "The culmination event is the 'yellow brick road', which is a six-mile obstacle course." "Everyone who completes the course gets a yellow brick. For some, that's just as important as the diploma."

McConville said what he got out of it was the chance to get in shape, learn new investigative skills and network with officers from around the country.

The EHPD selected McConville for the program. Then he applied, and went through an extensive interview and background check process. "I'm honored to have been accepted," McConville said, noting that only 2 percent of law enforcement officials get the chance to go to the academy. To date, 40,252 officers have graduated from the Academy.

Not all of the EHPD's officers are human. The Department's K-9 program is known as one of Connecticut's finest since it began in 1990. Since then, ten K-9 teams have served East Hartford, and have an impressive list of accomplishments, including assistance with more than 1,000 arrests and having performed demonstrations for more than a quarter of a million people. The K-9 unit has seized more than 100 pounds of marijuana and 13 pounds of cocaine.

The teams from East Hartford also responded quickly and assisted in the search and rescue efforts at the World Trade Center on 9-11. Officer Todd Mora and his partner Primo just graduated from the State Police K-9 Academy, and veteran K-9 Officer John Zavalick is also training with his new partner Axel.

Reaching out to children in the school community is another function of the EHPD. Officers Robert Rohner and Marc Caruso at East Hartford High School, and James Murray at the middle school keep lines of communication open, and monitor safety at the schools. They also teach informal classes and assist teachers with lessons on law or local government.

The Citizen Police Academy is a program that the department runs to teach residents of East Hartford about the EHPD, including criminal investigations, evidentiary services, use of force, and police employment and training. The program also includes a history of the department and an update on proactive policing efforts. The next session of the academy starts this fall.

The EHPD continues its efforts to be part of the community. Officers regularly meet with neighborhood organizations, such as the North Side Residents and Merchants Association, and South End Merchants Association. They also organize neighborhood watch programs, and keep regular foot patrols.

According to a statement from Officer Hugo Benettieri, "Effective community policing depends on optimizing contact between patrol officers and community members so that the officer develops an understanding of the day-to-day workings of the community and becomes a familiar figure to the community."



New Officers Frank Napolitano, Don Loehr, Juan Rivera III, Chris Vasseur, Dan Ortiz, Todd Lentocho, being sworn in. Photo Contributed.



Lieutenant Timothy McConville, FBI Academy graduate.