

## Youth Programs Promote Homegrown Police Officers and Firefighters

Committing to a career in public service can be a difficult decision. Often times, the risk is high, hours long and the pay is low. People choose to become police officers or firefighters because they care about their community and have a sense of duty to protect it. The best place to find dedicated officers and firefighters is within the community. Mauldin's Police and Fire department have been creating community programs to help develop potential employees within our City.

One such program is the Explorer Program which is a career-oriented program offered by Learning for Life, a branch of the Boy Scouts of America. Nearly a decade ago, the Mauldin Police Department's Explorer Post #2228 consisted of 3 members. Meetings were held once a month, but were more of a paper experiment rather than a life opportunity. Over time, with the right instructors, the right cadets, and funding from Mauldin City Government, we were able to not only propel our Explorer post to one of the best in South Carolina, but also in the United States.

Realizing that our Explorer Post was designed to work with youth ages 14-21, our attempt to draw in attention from current students in that age range was not working. Explorer Post could not compete with travel ball, hanging out with friends, or video games.

During the summer of 2007, Mauldin Police started the Police Youth Academy (PYA). By design the PYA targeted those kids in the 11-14 year old age range. For a few weeks in the summer the kids get an inside look at police life, officer's responsibilities, and the value of working as a team. Before kids left the PYA, they and their parents were given a chance to learn more about Explorer Post. Fast-forward eight years later, the impact is evident.

Currently Mauldin Explorer Post #2228 consists of 19 members. We have 3 police instructors, and classes meet on a bi-weekly basis. For the past three years we have competed on the National level and have ranked as high as 3rd in Post performance drills. Our Post is filled with a majority of students from the PYA as well as interested persons from the Mauldin High School ROTC program. We have been fortunate enough to be able to hire three past Explorers into full time slots within the Mauldin Police Department. Hiring someone who has volunteered their time, energy, and enthusiasm to the police department for years is an easy decision.

The Mauldin Fire Department Explorer Program was started 10 years ago and the program is at capacity with 6 explorers. Like the Police Program, the Fire Program allows the department to interact with the students and provide them with hands on experience.

Another program that Mauldin Fire supports is through the Golden Strip Career Center. This program requires the students to be a part of the Fire Explorer Program. This program is the first of its kind in Greenville County.

The students complete an orientation program in their Sophomore Year. As a Junior, they begin the Firefighter-I course. The program is based on National Standards with a curriculum set up for 2.5 contact hours per day. Upon completion they will move on to the Firefighter-II program and will be required, among other things, to attend live burn training. Because the student is part of the Mauldin Fire Department's Explorer Post, related rules and regulations apply.

Each student is outfitted with a full set of turnout gear including a mask. They are required to take an Athletic Physical before participating in the program.

The expectation is that a student beginning in their Sophomore Year and completing the program will be fully trained upon graduation from High School. The student will be prepared to earn an associate or bachelor's degree in a Fire Service related field.

Mauldin Fire Department uses their Fire Safety Program as another avenue to reach kids and adults. This program includes a puppet show and Fire Safety House which was purchased through FEMA Grants. The fire safety house is delivered upon request to the schools and day cares. The fire safety house uses artificial smoke to teach the kids, K5 through 4<sup>th</sup> grade, what to do in the event their home catches on fire and how to make a plan in the event of an emergency. The Fire Prevention Carnival is held during Fire Prevention Week in October. Day cares and schools plan field trips to the carnival to learn about fire safety. Fire trucks are on display as well as games that teach fire safety. Saturday is open to the public.

Engaging the youth of the community encourages a sense of partnership and commitment. Investing in the necessary training for local students creates a sustainable workforce with vital ties to the community. The youth become familiar with the culture of the departments and demonstrate their dedication early which guarantees continued success in the agency. The Mauldin Police Department recently hired three such individuals from the Explorer Program.

- Carson Steinmetz started Explorer Post #2228 when he was 18 years old. He was hired in early 2012 and is now approaching his third year of full time employment with Mauldin Police. Carson serves as a dispatcher in our Communications Center. Carson spends his day taking calls for service, and dispatching Police and Fire personnel to needed events.



Carson Steinmetz

- Coly Forrester started Explorer Post #2228 when he was 14 years old. Coly was hired in 2012 as a dispatcher in our Communications Center. After working for 2 years as a dispatcher, Coly took the next step and joined the Mauldin Police Department as a sworn police officer in 2014 when he graduated basic training class at the SCCJA. Coly also has spent the past several summers working as an instructor to the Police Youth Academy.



Coly Forrester

- Adam Bradshaw started Explorer Post #2228 when he was 14 years old. Adam continued on with the Explorer Post until he turned 21. At that time, Adam wish to become more involved with the Mauldin Police Department and was hired on as a reserve officer and continued in as a reserve until he graduated from Presbyterian College in early 2014. Just recently Adam was hired on as a police officer and will be attending the SCCJA for basic training in September 2014. Adam spent his past three summers with Mauldin Police as an instructor for the Police Youth Academy.



Adam Bradshaw