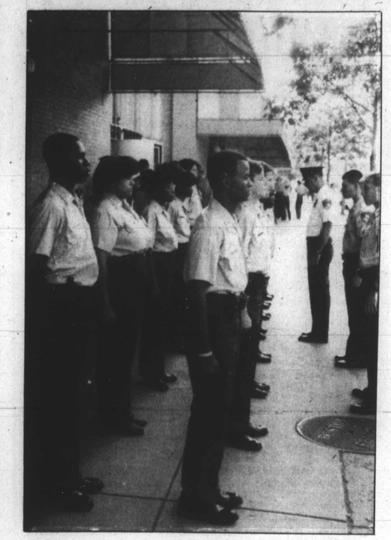
Explorers are making a difference

By Ejike Obineme
AFRO Staff Writer



ATTENTION . . . Explorer scouts stand at attention just before marching at the Convention parade.

The Law Enforcement Explorers Program, is in high gear in Baltimore City, and organizers and participants say they are making a difference.

With the involvement of young people in drugs at an all-time high, the organizers take pride in the fact that the program is helping to keep the participants busy.

That leaves little or no time to engage in serious crimes that ruin the lifes of many teenagers.

"We try to expose them to positive things going on in the community," said Major Ronald B. Collins, who is in charge of the youth section at the Baltimore City Police Department.

Collins also oversees the Explorers Posts attached to the nine Police Districts in the city.

Collins acknowledged the fact that some kids come from single parent families, headed by women. Some of these kids, he said, lack good role models because of the absence of father figures, and the Explorer's program gives them the role model they cannot get from anywhere else.

FORWARD MARCH . . . The Maryland contingent takes to the field at the National Convention of Law Enforcement Explorer Scouts held recently in Boston.

The Explorer program is sanctioned by the Boys Scout of America and it encompasses youngsters between 14 and 21 years of age.

It is a career oriented program that exposes youngsters to the vocations in which they may be interested.

Other establishments like the Fire Department also have their own Explorer programs.

Members of the Law Enforcement Explorer's program gives its members an insight into the many specialties that are used by modern law enforcement agencies in the final against crime.

Participants are also exposed to the basic organizatior.al structure and administrative terminology that will enable them to better understand the workings of a police agency.

Those accepted into the program are expected to maintain certain scholastic record. Only senior high school students who maintain a C average are accepted, although Collins maintains that "no child is turned away."

The participants are however expected to live within their District Post and unlike the Boy Scouts, it is open to males and females.

Sergeant Goldie Phillips is responsible for the expansion of the Northwestern District Post of the Explorer's program. In 1986, there was only one person in the program in that post.

He went to churches, community organizations and schools to request young people to become involved.

That move paid off because today, the Northwestern District Post has 27 active members in the program, the highest in the city, and Phillips said his aim is to bring that number up to 50.

Phillips said that one important aspect of the program is that the children are taught to become involved in the community affairs.

Last year members of the program took part in the Say NO To Drugs Parade," they participated in Law Day, visited the sick and the elderly, and have given support to traffic control.

The members have also received training in crime scene searches as the police believe that an occasion may arise, when a number of people are needed to assist with searching an area in Baltimore.

If this occurs, the police Explorer Scouts will stand trained and ready to respond.

The Baltimore Explorer Scouts recently attended the National Law Enforcement Explorer Conference in Boston.

Led by Officer Donald Grant of Northwestern District, the members took part in seminars and drills in subjects such as Arrest and Search, Bomb Threat Response, Crime Prevention, Shoot/Don't Shoot, and Traffic Accident Investigation.

The Conference gave the participants wide exposure to law enforcement issues. One of the participants, 17-year-old Gladys Wilson, has since decided to join the police force when she comes of age.

Grant said that Wilson can become a cadet next year when she turns 18 and 21, she can be a real officer.

Presently, Wilson, who joined the program in 1983, cherishes the fact that she has earned the right to be referred to as "Lieutenant" because of her seniority in the program.

She said it gives her pride and honor, and that the rank gives her leadership responsibility.

But not everyone in the program will end up in the police force. "Sergeant" Charles Walker, aged 15, said that he plans to be a professional basketball player.

For the moment, Walker, who lives in the Park Heights area, noted for high incidence of crime, said the program helps him keep out of trouble.

Grant said that although the program is running very well, more funds are needed to make it even stronger. He was optimistic that the general public will turn out in great numbers during the August 20 Pimlico luncheon and fanfare to raise money to support the program. That optimism was shared by other organizers and participants.

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Community Calendar

Evening films featured

Three short films featuring animal characters in lighthearted adventures, will be shown at the Randallstown Area Branch of the Baltimore County Public Library on Thursday, August 11, at 7 p.m. Families are invited; children under age six must be accompanied by an adult.

* * *

Annual plant sale to be held

The Baltimore African Violet Club will hold its annual plant sale at The Hunt Valley Mall on September 16 and 17, Friday and Saturday during mall hours. Hunt Valley Mall can be reached by taking I-83 north exiting at Shawan Road.

Hundreds of African Violets will be available along with other related plants. Colors of violets range from reds to dark purples, fantasy blossoms, double flowers, variegated foliage and unusual color combinations. Types of African Violet plants will include standards, semi-minatures, minatures, microminiatures and trailers.

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