

## **Police Reserves Provide Local Hiring Pool**

In the mid-1990s, a majority of the 18 police officers in the city of **Morrilton, Arkansas** (6,600), lived outside the county, prompting complaints from residents that good jobs were not going to local citizens who needed them. To increase the pool of eligible local candidates for police officer positions and provide additional staff when needed, the department created a reserve program.

### **Leadership/staffing**

Most of the program's training is provided by Morrilton police officers, with additional sessions offered by state troopers and staff of the state's commission on law enforcement standards.

### **Timeline**

The reserve program began in July 1997. Training is offered once a year. The most recent class ran from December 2005 through April 2006. Students meet every Tuesday and Thursday from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m., with occasional Saturday sessions.

### **Budget/funding**

The department spends approximately \$4,300 per class, primarily on overtime pay and compensatory time for instructors. Candidates must pay \$150 plus the cost of ammunition to take the course, although classes are free to the staff of outside agencies that supply instructors for the program.

### **Program description**

Applicants for reserve officer positions are treated in the same way as applicants for full-time officer positions. The department performs background checks and interviews, and those who are admitted must complete a rigorous training program. Although the state requires that reserve officers receive 110 hours of training, the Morrilton reserve candidates receive more than 170 hours. Training covers such topics as law enforcement standards, defensive tactics, firearm use, and accident investigation.

Those who complete the training program become reserve officers. They are issued uniforms and are called on whenever additional personnel are needed. Some reserve officers have full-time jobs and enjoy the opportunity to help the department out when needed, but many hope to apply for full-time positions when openings become available.

Because the reserve officers receive so much training and on-the-job experience, the department considers them to be as qualified for new positions as experienced police officers from other communities. As a result, the department has been able to hire many of its reserve officers.

### **Results**

Today, only 4 of the department's 18 officers live outside the county. Currently, 25 students who completed the reserve program are police officers, including 9 with the Morrilton department. When reserves are hired for full-time positions, they must complete a 12-week training program at the state police academy, and most score in the top 5 percent of their class. In addition to providing additional staffing when needed, the program saves the department money because when reserves are hired, they need very little additional supervision.

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