

## **Academy gives civilians taste of law enforcement**

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One of the first points Detective Sgt. Scott Henderson made sure the 16<sup>th</sup> Citizen's Police Academy understood was that the class will not make us police officers.

"I thought when I left here I was going to be a cop!" Dennis Ferrantino of Morris said with a laugh.

It may not make us cops, Henderson said, but it will teach us the what, how, and whys of police business, which in the end will make us better citizens "and us better cops," he said.

Although I was just as disappointed as Dennis with the news, Chief Brent Dite did give us all really cool Morris police pins that made me feel a little better.

"It won't get you out of a traffic ticket, but it's your version of a badge," Dite told the class.

I put the pin on my driver's side visor in direct view of someone who might bend down to lean into my window, maybe to ask for my driver's license and registration. It can't hurt, right?

Besides the neat pin and our very own Morris Police Department Citizen's Police Academy binders, our first class March 18 was very enlightening.

Just the physical requirements alone to become a Morris officer was shocking to me and made me realize how out of shape I really am in.

For instance, women have to be able to bench press 58 percent of their body weight – that is 71 pounds for me. And believe it or not, my scrawny arms could never do that.

In addition to the physical test there are also written, oral and psychological exams, plus candidates are required to take a polygraph test.

Detective Eric Werden shared a story with us about a fellow student when he was in the police academy who passed all the tests except he could not do the required amount of sit-ups in one minute, which is 37. Upon retaking the test, which you are allowed to do one time, he missed it by one sit-up. He never entered law enforcement.

Not that I ever believed a police officer's job was easy, I guess I never realized how difficult it could be just to become an officer.

But that is the point of the Citizen's Police Academy, to learn and gain a new perspective of a police officer's job.

In the coming weeks I look forward to learning about identity theft, child victim advocacy and traffic laws. But I have to be completely honest, I am most excited about getting to conduct an actual building search. Henderson has promised to let us handle a fake gun and play a version of cops and robbers.

Now I just have to talk the chief into getting me a real badge...

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