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Local students learn about law enforcement opportunities at Keiser University

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SARASOTA -- The smell of a rotting body isn't something one forgets.

A Sarasota County Sheriff's SWAT team member quickly got the attention of 25 North Port High School Criminal Justice students who recently toured **Keiser University** in Sarasota during Law Enforcement Appreciation Day at the college.

Tom Dusseau explained the duties of the SWAT team include being on-call 24 hours a day. The team performs high-risk operations outside of the regular duties of deputies. The Sheriff's 21 SWAT members are trained to serve high-risk arrest warrants, do hostage rescues, counter-terrorism operations and engage in taking down heavily-armed criminals.

"We operate under stressful situations," Dusseau said. "We train 16 hours a month to maintain our fitness and exercise our agility."

He told students that sometimes they discover dead bodies that have been decomposing for a while.

One student yelled out "that's cool."

Dusseau assure him it wasn't and it is a "smell that you don't forget."

Outside, students were amazed that all of the SWAT members can fit in the compact armored vehicle equipped with sniper holes to shoot their high-powered weapons -- if necessary.

Crime Scene Technicians Jessica Hendrickson and Jessica Jarecki, both Keiser graduates, explained they enter crime scenes after SWAT and other law enforcement officers have secured the situation.

CSI technicians then collect DNA evidence and take it back to the lab to be processed.

They explained they do not wear stilettos or drive a Hummer to crime scenes like characters they see on the television show "CSI Miami."

"We don't solve crimes in an hour either," said Hendrickson, adding it takes more than two weeks for the results of DNA testing.

"We call it the 'CSI effect,'" Jarecki said. "Television crime shows are not what happens in reality."

Students saw examples of the university's small class sizes while touring forensics, nursing and other classrooms.

They saw a how fingerprints are lifted from car doors and other surfaces. They saw a drug identification chart on the wall that forensics students must familiarize themselves with during training.

While participating in Law Enforcement Day at Keiser, representatives of the Florida Highway Patrol, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Federal Protective Service, U.S. Coast Guard, Sheriff's Office and Florida Department of Juvenile Justice interacted with students.

Judy Williams, of the Sheriff's Mounted Patrol, explained that deputies on horses use radar guns to catch speeders. The Mounted Patrol unit evolved from a group of volunteers to having full-time and cross-trained deputies who patrol beaches, parks, search for missing persons and other duties.

Students were mesmerized by the sheriff's Hazardous Devices Unit, which uses a bomb detecting robot. The \$46,000 robot, which was purchased with money from a Homeland Security Grant, is used to handle bombs, explosives and other dangerous materials.

For NPHS Criminal Justice teacher Ryan LaVallee, the field trip was the first he has ever taken students on from the school.

"It was great (and) they learned a lot," he said. "Keiser paid for half of our trip, which made it possible for us to go."

Chris Parent, **Keiser University** community relations coordinator, who led the tour, said "students asked a lot of really good questions."

"They were also well-behaved."

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