

'Behind the **BADGE** one day'

Four Archdale-Trinity Middle School students attend Junior Sheriff's Academy

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COUNTY

Four students from Archdale-Trinity Middle School have a better idea of law enforcement operations in the county following a week of Junior Sheriff's Academy. During the week of July 24-28, they were among 14 students from across the county who took part in physical training, SCUBA diving, tactical operations, rappelling, fire safety and tours of the jail, courthouse and 911 call

center.

Alicia Thayer enjoys all things associated with law enforcement, the reason ATMS School Resource Officer Vanessa Moser advised the rising ninth-grader to fill out a JSA application.

"I liked scuba diving," said Thayer. "We went underwater. That was probably my favorite day."

She named rappelling as her least favorite activity.

"It took three tries. I'm scared of heights," she

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Photos by Debbie Hightower

Billy Tibbens, right, straps in Archdale-Trinity Middle School student Logan May prior to a trip down the side of the rappelling tower during Junior Sheriff's Academy. May was one of 14 participants in the group who participated in activities including physical training, SCUBA diving, tactical operations, rappelling, fire safety and tours of the jail, courthouse and 911 call center.

BADGE

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said. “Finally I just did it because my friend did it. It gave me a feeling of accomplishment.”

Something she will always remember, Thayer was deeply impacted by a tour of the jail in which she encountered a 19-year-old female inmate.

“It was kind of sad,” she said. “Some people made mistakes and that’s why they were there.”

Seth Miller, whose career plans are to enter the military, appreciated the discipline, physical training and exposure to law enforcement personnel he acquired during JSA. He names it as a positive experience — one definitely worth getting up for.

“I learned how to scuba dive,” he said. “If there is a murder, we learned how to identify where the gunshots came from, how to track fingerprints and other crime scene techniques and procedures.”

According to Lt. Traci Williams of RCSO, the agency has been putting on Junior Sheriff’s Academy since 1998, when at-risk teens were invited to participate. In recent years, however, the focus of the program shifted to teens with a good discipline record who are interested in a law enforcement career.

Moser said during the week JSA students were exposed to a variety of different

skills and procedures used by all branches of law enforcement and emergency services personnel with the goal of increasing their awareness and possibly inspiring an interest in a career in law enforcement.

“It would just give them an idea of what we do on a daily basis,” she said. “They got to see a SWAT team and a K-9 unit came out. They got to drive a golf cart and see what impaired drivers would be like. We hope to build them up and maybe encourage them to want to do a law enforcement career.”

Aiden May appreciated experiences he wouldn’t otherwise have had, such as the mock SWAT team operations when a battering ram broke down a door to get to a suspect, thereby saving a life.

“We did scuba diving and riding on the boats at Randleman Lake,” he said. “It’s a really fun experience and I would recommend anyone to do it, even if you are not the strongest person ever. It trains your body.”

“This year we’ve done a lot of new things,” said Aiden’s twin brother Logan May. “They didn’t do the fire stuff last year. They told us how they collect evidence and how they do fingerprints. They have magnetic dust that they spray around and it just shows up. When [Baptist] Air Care came, I thought it was really cool how they had all that technology on board. It was really cool.”

At the conclusion of the week, JSA participants received a certificate of participation at a graduation ceremony held on the campus of Randolph Community College.

“Congratulations and a job well done to all of the participants of the Junior Sheriff’s Academy,” said Sheriff Robert Graves. “We appreciate your interest in your Sheriff’s Office and the law enforcement profession and hope to see you behind the badge one day.”

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