

The national events we have all been watching are disheartening to all of us here at the Decatur Police Department. Many years ago we began the journey to be a department that did not wait for a tragic incident before reviewing, researching, amending or implementing policies and new technology that would keep community members and officers safer and more transparent, to make community policing a philosophy that permeates the culture of our department not just a slogan or a program and to use the strategic planning process in an unheard-of way for police departments. We strive to be transparent, fair and responsible in how we serve our community and how we enforce the law. It is very difficult for police officers across the country to be painted with the same broad brush as the officers who commit criminal acts and abuse the power entrusted to them. While we know we are not those officers, it is still our responsibility to show the community we serve that we are transparent, fair and accountable.

Throughout June, we received numerous inquiries about the policies and practices of our department regarding a variety of topics such as recruitment & hiring, officer training, use of force policy, body cameras and more. In addition to answering those who reached out directly and asked specific questions, we also want to share the information to the community that we serve.

Military Equipment

There are government programs in which police departments can purchase surplus military equipment at discounted costs. Our department does not participate in these programs.

Recruitment & Hiring:

We strive to recruit and hire the very best candidates to serve as police officers in our community. We are not simply looking for a person that can pass the academy with basic skills. We spend a great deal of time vetting applicants to make certain we are hiring the right people for our department. They must be socially engaged, emotionally healthy, empathetic, approachable officers with a motivation to serve for the right reasons. We are seeking “Community Relations Officers Who Enforce the Law”, officers who are invested in the community they are serving. The officers must embody our Core Values of Approachability, Integrity, Adaptability, Collaboration and Empathy. We also seek to recruit and hire officers from diverse demographics and backgrounds to represent the community we serve.

Many smaller police departments rely on hiring from the pool of applicants that apply or they participate in free law enforcement job fairs. In 2008, in partnership with the city, we created our first recruitment campaign with printed materials, ads and a video. Our first recruiting campaign was very different from other police departments with a video highlighting empathy, working with the community and higher standards. Our printed material included rack cards with “A Decatur police officer’s preferred weapon” over a graphic of a brain and “Required: honesty, integrity, and one of these” over a graphic of a spine. Our subsequent updated recruitment video created in 2018 further highlighted accountability, body cameras and the importance of service over self. No actors were used. Our officers and communications officers, of various

demographics, participated to show that we wanted to recruit all types of people to serve our department.

We have also instituted higher pay for applicants with college degrees and prior law enforcement service. Additionally, we began participating in more job fairs on college campuses as well as one at Decatur High School in partnership with Georgia Piedmont Technical College. We now participate in job fairs in our community that require fees and job fairs that are not exclusively dedicated to careers in law enforcement. Rather than relying on our training officer to attend all recruiting events, we send officers that represent varying demographics, race, age and gender. We invite potential applicants to participate in ride-a-longs with our department. We also went from hosting the occasional college intern to hosting interns nearly every semester and recruiting those who were interested in a law enforcement career to apply and join our department. In a time when most police departments across the country have been trying to manage staffing shortages and struggling to attract qualified applicants, we invested, put in the work and filled our open positions without having to sacrifice standards.

Joining our department is not a quick and easy process. We take the time to thoroughly vet applicants and conduct extensive background checks. After completing an application, the process includes written testing; a panel interview with questions designed to gauge judgment, honesty, integrity, interpersonal skills, communication skills, how they handle pressure and disagreements, their experience working with diverse people/backgrounds. A thorough background investigation is then conducted that is based on their education, job history, residential history, personal references they provide as well as references we identify through the course of the background investigation, records checks independent of criminal arrest histories to identify prior incidents where an arrest was not made, prior civil filings such as protection orders, social media audits; a home interview; a CVSA (Computer Voice Stress Analyzer) exam to verify information provided during a background investigation; examination of P.O.S.T. records and personnel files for officers with prior service; psychological testing and medical examinations. Upon completion of the background investigation, the applicant must then complete an interview with the Chief of Police.

All newly hired recruits/officers complete an orientation at which time they meet one on one with the departmental training officer who instructs them on our Code of Ethics, Code of Conduct, our Vision & Mission Statements and Core Values. This information is not merely handed over in printed materials and assumed to be read. They must also sign our integrity statement.

Training:

We place a high value on training and put real support behind this value. It is easy to overlook training needs when being faced with making decisions about funding and staffing. Our city and department hold training for our officers as a critical need and make the adjustments rather than saying, "we do not have the funds or staffing". We strive not to simply meet the minimum standards set forth by Georgia P.O.S.T. (Peace Officers Standards and Training Council) who

govern the certification requirements of police officers in our State. We work to exceed the standards. For example, many agencies our size do not typically hire non-certified officers and send them to the police academy to be certified due to budget constraints. We have continued to recruit and hire officers from various backgrounds and send them to the academy. This is how we recruit and hire college graduates as well as applicants changing careers who bring a variety of life and professional experiences to the police profession. We also choose to pay costs associated with sending our police recruits to the 17-week Georgia Piedmont Technical College Law Enforcement Academy when we could send them to the free 12-week State academy. We believe the additional training and collegiate setting produces a better trained officer.

All certified officers are required by Georgia P.O.S.T. to attend 20 hours of in-service training each year to keep their certifications. The 20 annual in-service training hours required by P.O.S.T. must include:

- Community Policing
 - Police Legitimacy, Procedural Justice and Community Relations
 - Cultural Awareness
 - Fostering Positive Community Relations
- De-escalation Options for Gaining Compliance
- Firearms Qualification
- Use of Force

Our department additionally requires annual in-service training on the following:

- Biased-Based Profiling
- Code of Conduct
- Code of Ethics
- Complaints and Internal Investigations
- Dealing with the Mentally Ill and Persons of Diminished Capacity
- Evidence and Property Control
- Firearms Qualification (DPD requires a 2nd annual qualification w/Use of Force Review)
- Organizational Structure
- Prisoner Restraint and Transport
- Search & Seizure
- Selection and Hiring
- Sexual Harassment
- Vehicle Pursuits

While P.O.S.T. requires officers to attend 20 hours of in-service training each year, our officers average 80-90 hours of in-service training each year.

We have received specific questions about de-escalation training. Scenario-based de-escalation training is a large part of the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training that our officers complete. CIT is a training course for law enforcement in partnership with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). While NAMI recommends that 20% of officers at a department complete CIT, we send all of our officers to the course. “De-escalation Options for Gaining Compliance” is also now

a course required to be completed annually by P.O.S.T. Additionally, we budgeted for and purchased a firearms training simulator for judgmental scenario-based training. This system allows for us to place officers in realistic scenarios and respond to actions taken or not taken by the officer to include their dialogue to de-escalate the situation. This helps to train officers that not every situation needs force and also reinforces the power of de-escalation. We have also incorporated de-escalation into our firearms and use of force training to not only train for a deadly use of force encounter but to train for de-escalating force when a person complies.

Additional in-service training our officers have attended includes:

- ACT (At-Risk Adult Crime Tactics) Specialist Certification
- Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT)
- Basic Criminal Investigator
- Beyond Community Policing
- Child Death & Homicide Investigations
- Child Exploitation
- Citizen Complaints/Internal Affairs
- CPR/1st Aid/AED
- Crime Prevention for the 21st Century
- Criminal Apprehension for Patrol
- Criminal Procedure
- Crisis Intervention Team (CIT)
- CVSA (Computer Voice Stress Analyzer) Operator Certification
- Defensive Tactics
- Domestic Violence
- Elder Abuse & Exploitation Training
- Emerging Law Enforcement Legal Trends
- Evidence and Property Room Management
- Evidence Collection & Processing
- Excited Delirium Instructor
- Fair and Impartial Policing©
- Field Training Officer
- First Responder
- G.A.L.E.C. Chaplain's Training
- Health and Wellness
- Interviews and Interrogations
- Instructor Trainer Certification
- Intelligence Analysis
- Investigating Basic Sex Crimes
- Leadership among Female Officers
- Legal Updates
- LIDAR
- Management Level 1

- Management Level 2
- Management Level 3
- Media and Public Relations
- Mental Health 1st Aid
- News Media Relations
- Off Duty Conduct
- Officer Survival
- Patrol Rifle
- Police Applicant Background Investigations
- Police Motorcycle Training
- Preventing Community Crisis
- Proactive Leadership
- Professionalism and Ethics
- Rape Aggression Defense (R.A.D.) Instructor Training
- Safety in our Schools
- School Resource Officer Training
- Social Media and Community Outreach
- Social Media Training
- Special Events Safety
- Supervision Level 1
- Supervision Level 2
- Supervision Level 3
- Suspicious Activity Reporting
- Talk Tactics: Verbal De-Escalation
- TASER Instructor
- The Problem of Dog Related Incidents and Encounters
- Transportation of Detainees
- Verbal Judo
- Women's Leadership Institute – International Association of Chiefs of Police
- Workplace of Difference for Law Enforcement Agencies - Anti-Defamation League

Officer Demographics:

We have been asked if the diversity of our department reflects the diversity of the community we serve. A tab for “Demographic Analysis” was added to our web page in 2018. While our staff is more diverse than the residential population of the city, we consider residents, business owners and those who work and visit our city to be included in the community that we serve. Comparable national statistics are only readily available regarding race and gender. We include positions of leadership such as supervisors and field training officers (FTOs). FTOs train and evaluate all new officers one-on-one, whether they have just graduated from the academy or have prior law enforcement experience at another agency. Our FTOs are critical to the development of new officers and as leaders in our department.

We also find great value in attracting and hiring candidates with diverse backgrounds and life experiences. We currently have officers with backgrounds in social work, customer service, hotel hospitality, ministry, retail, mental health, education, massage therapy and parks & recreation in addition to military service, prior law enforcement and those who joined our department directly after college.

Decatur Police Department Officer Demographics

Decatur Police 2020		
Gender	Male: 75%	Female: 25%
Race	White: 54%	POC: 46%
Leadership Positions*	White: 58%	POC: 42%

*Leadership positions include supervisors & field training officers

Decatur Police 2018		
Gender	Male: 78%	Female: 22%
Race	White: 64%	POC: 36%
Leadership Positions*	White: 71%	POC: 29%

*Leadership positions include supervisors & field training officers

National*		
Gender	Male: 85%	Female: 15%
Race	White: 77%	POC: 23%

*2018 from Data USA site (most recent data)

Use of Force Policy/8 Can't Wait Campaign:

We have been asked about our use of force policy specifically related to the "8 Can't Wait" campaign.

#1: Ban chokeholds and strangleholds. *Chokeholds are prohibited.*

#2: Require de-escalation. *Officers should use only that level of force necessary to overcome resistance. Officers should make every effort to minimize the risk for misunderstanding during encounters with citizens. Verbal control may be in the form of advice, persuasion, admonitions, or orders. When properly used, the volume and tone of the officer's voice can be an effective tool for assuming control of a situation without need to progress to a higher level of force.*

#3: Require warning before shooting. *Officers shall give some warning of the imminent use of deadly force if the circumstances permit such a warning.*

#4: Require exhausts all alternatives before shooting. *Officers should use only that level of force necessary to overcome resistance. Where deadly force is not authorized, officers shall use only that level of force reasonably necessary to bring an incident under control.*

Our policy restricts the use of deadly force by an officer in the performance of duty to the following:

- *To apprehend a suspected felon only when the officer reasonably believes that the suspect possesses a deadly weapon or any object, device, or instrument which, when used offensively against a person, is likely to or actually does result in serious bodily injury*
- *When the officer reasonably believes that the suspect poses an immediate threat or physical violence to the officer or others*
- *When there is probable cause to believe that the suspect has committed a crime involving the infliction or threatened infliction of serious physical harm.*

The following examples are provided to show when an officer may use deadly force:

- *To protect the officer or others from what is reasonably believed to be a threat of death or serious bodily harm and all available means of defense have failed or would be inadequate or dangerous under the circumstances; or,*
- *To prevent the escape of a fleeing felon whom the officer has probable cause to believe will pose a significant threat to human life should escape occur; or,*
- *When necessary to prevent forcible felonies; or*
- *To destroy an animal that represents a physical threat to public safety and animal control personnel are unavailable.*

#5: Duty to intervene. Our use of force policy was recently amended to require officers to intervene to prevent the use of excessive force. Any officer present and observing another officer, from the Decatur Police Department or an outside agency, using force that is clearly beyond that which is objectively reasonable under the circumstances shall, when in a position to do so safely, intervene either verbally or physically to prevent or stop the use of excessive

force. Officers must promptly report any excessive or unreasonable force to a supervisor as soon as possible. Supervisors must respond and document the incident

#6: Ban shooting at or from moving vehicles. *Shots shall not be fired at or from a moving vehicle except if the suspect attempts to use deadly force against the officer.*

#7: Require use of force continuum. *Our policy contains a use of force continuum of resistance levels and control levels.*

Resistance Levels:

- *Compliant*
- *Psychological*
- *Verbal Non-Compliance*
- *Passive Resistance*
- *Defensive Resistance*
- *Active Resistance*
- *Aggravated Aggression*

Control Levels:

- *Officer Presence*
- *Verbal Commands*
- *Soft/Empty Hand Control*
- *Chemical Agents*
- *Taser (Implemented in 2018 to add an additional less than lethal option)*
- *Hard/Empty Hand Striking Techniques*
- *Intermediate Weapons*
- *Lethal/Deadly Force*

#8: Require comprehensive reporting. *Our policy requires a written report from an officer when:*

- *An officer's firearm is discharged, to include accidental discharges, outside of training or recreational purposes; or*
- *Use of force results in injury or death; or*
- *Force is applied through the use of lethal or less-than-lethal weapons;*
- *A person complains an injury has been inflicted; or,*
- *A misconduct is alleged; or,*
- *The use of force results in property damage.*
- *When any level of force higher than level three in the use of force continuum is used.*

Additionally, the supervisor is required to:

- *Initiate a preliminary investigation into the incident, take photographs of the involved officer(s) and person(s) depicting any potential injuries or documenting the lack of any injuries to the parties involved, document any property damage, secure any evidence, interview witnesses, interview officers and review their written reports*

- *Complete a Use of Force Report (separate report from an incident report that is prepared by supervisors*
- *Immediately notify the Chief of Police, or if unavailable, the next highest ranking officer, if circumstances dictate*
- *Address a memorandum to the Chief of Police advising any facts revealed in the investigation and any discrepancies*
- *Submit all reports & memoranda via the appropriate division commander*

Additionally, our use of force policy requires:

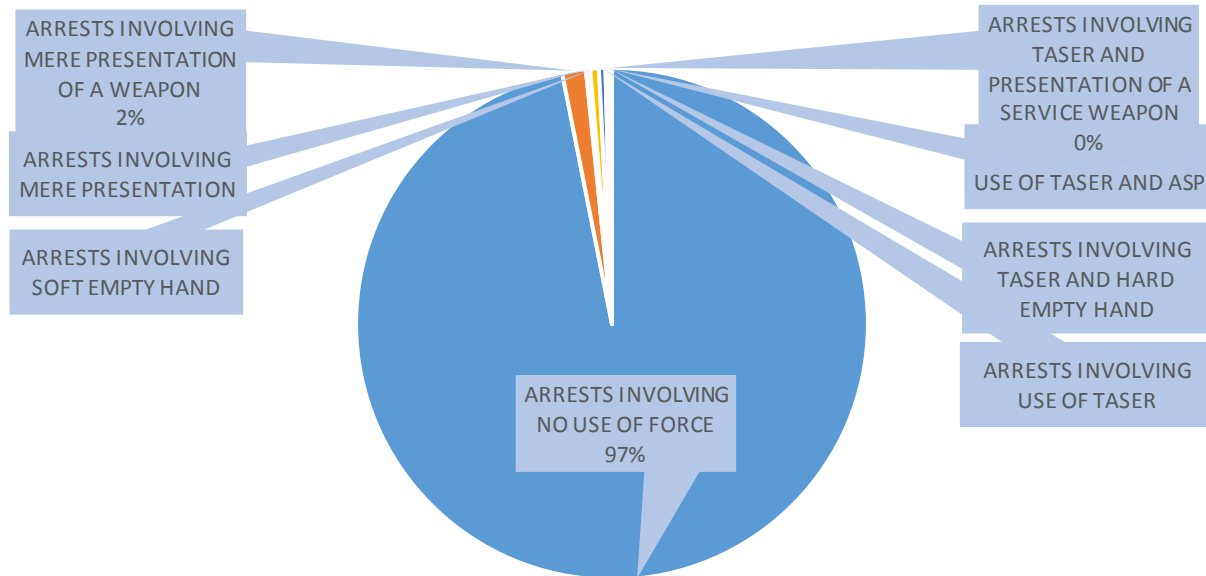
- That if during a use of force incident any person(s) is injured or complains of an injury, the officers on scene shall summon emergency medical personnel to render aid. Officers present shall render any first-aid within their capabilities, until the arrival of such emergency medical personnel.
- That if an officer is involved in an off-duty incident in which the use of force results in injury or death, they shall immediately notify the Chief of Police or, if unavailable, the next highest ranking officer.
- An annual analysis of use of force incidents is conducted to ascertain policy and/or training needs.

Lastly, unlike most law enforcement agencies, we count pointing a Taser or a service weapon at a person as a use of force. We want to investigate the threat of these types of force in addition to the use of a Taser or weapon. We also want to track instances of officers de-escalating the level of force being used.

Decatur Police Department Use of Force Incidents

YEAR	INCIDENTS
2010	36
2011	38
2012	31
2013	22
2014	28
2015	23
2016	19
2017	18
2018	18
2019	23

2019 Use of Force Incidents



TOTAL ARREST	736	PERCENTAGE
ARRESTS INVOLVING NO USE OF FORCE	713	96.9%
ARRESTS INVOLVING MERE PRESENTATION OF A WEAPON	11	1.5%
ARRESTS INVOLVING MERE PRESENTATION OF TASER	2	0.3%
ARRESTS INVOLVING SOFT EMPTY HAND TECHNIQUES	4	0.5%
ARRESTS INVOLVING USE OF OC SPRAY	0	0.0%
ARRESTS INVOLVING USE OF TASER	3	0.4%
ARRESTS INVOLVING USE OF TASER AND ASP BATON	1	0.1%
ARRESTS INVOLVING TASER AND HARD EMPTY HAND TECHNIQUES	1	0.1%
ARRESTS INVOLVING TASER AND PRESENTATION OF A SERVICE WEAPON	1	0.1%
ARRESTS INVOLVING USE OF ASP BATON	0	0.0%
ARRESTS INVOLVING DEADLY FORCE	0	0.0%

Body-Worn Cameras:

Body-Worn cameras (BWC) were implemented for all of our uniformed patrol officers in 2015. Prior to 2015 we utilized BWC for our School Resource Officers and Business District Officers since they were primarily on foot or bicycles and our in-car camera systems would not capture most of their interactions. Departmental policy requires officers who work in uniform to wear a BWC. Officers are required to use BWCs for the following incidents/activities:

- All traffic stops
- Officer initiated contact for investigative purposes, to include criminal and non-criminal incidents
- All calls for service
- Receiving complaints of officer or other misconduct
- During prisoner transport and/or courtesy rides

Additionally, any time an officer is faced with a situation that does not necessarily fit into any of the above listed categories but wants to record the incident with the body worn camera, he/she may do so.

The camera is automatically activated by a sensor when the officer opens the door to their patrol car. The camera is also automatically activated when the officer's firearm is removed from their holster. An officer recording a required incident/activity can only turn the BWC off upon completion of the incident/activity. The recordings are transferred and archived to a cloud based system that prevents video from being edited or deleted. This transfer happens without any action the officer has to physically take.

Supervisors are required to randomly select body camera and in-car camera videos for each of their officers and review them monthly to verify officers are in compliance with departmental policy.

Early Intervention System for Number of Complaints

Our policy requires section commanders to identify officers or employees who receive an inordinately large number of complaints. As a general guideline, an officer or employee receiving a minimum of five (5) complaints within a two-year period would be subject to review. The circumstances involved in each complaint shall be evaluated before an officer or employee is classified as having received an excessive number of complaints.

It is also our practice for supervisors to review the personnel files of staff newly assigned to them so they can review any complaints, commendations and performance evaluations received while under the command of other supervisors.

Patrol supervisors also complete bi-monthly evaluations on officers rather than just the standard annual evaluation to more closely monitor any potential issues or additional training needs.

Additionally, investigations for internal and external complaints, use of force incidents, vehicle pursuits, foot pursuits and motor vehicle accidents are entered into an internal affairs software program for tracking. All of these investigations are prepared by assigned supervisors, then reviewed by a Division Commander, the Deputy Chief and the Chief of Police.

Use of force incidents, pursuits and citizen complaints are reviewed again annually as part of our State Certification requirement. We voluntarily participate in the Georgia Law Enforcement Certification Program which is a comprehensive set of model management, operational and service level standards for Georgia law enforcement agencies. We are currently one of 136 law enforcement agencies who have state certification out of the over 600 law enforcement agencies in Georgia. We complete a re-certification process to retain our State Certification every three years.

Use of Force & Officer Misconduct Records Available to Public:

An annual review of use of force incidents is completed by the Deputy Chief. The information is shared at our Citizen's Police Academy and available upon request. Internal investigations are subject to open records requests in the state of Georgia.

Collecting and Reporting Data on In-Custody Deaths

There is currently no State or Federal system to report in-custody deaths. If there were such a reporting system, we would participate if voluntary and comply if required. Currently, if we were to have someone in our custody die, we would contact the Georgia Bureau of Investigations.

Transport of Prisoners:

Our policy on restraint and transport states that no person shall be "hog-tied" and/or placed in a prone position while being transported. Additionally, handcuffs must be double-locked to prevent them from further tightening on a person's wrists and they must be seat-belted unless there is a reason the seat belt cannot be secured.

Officers receive training on positional asphyxia and excited delirium to prevent injury and death.

Strategic Planning Process:

In 2015, Chief Booker decided to change how our departmental strategic plan was developed and implemented. Traditionally, police department strategic plans are formulated and completed by command staff. Chief Booker questioned the practice of deciding what the

community needed from its police department rather than asking the community what they wanted.

A consultant helped with the process of reaching out to a cross section of various stakeholders resulting in 24 individual focus groups meeting to provide input as to the desired vision and direction of the Decatur Police Department. The focus groups consisted of diverse stakeholders including those who had filed complaints of racial profiling, seniors, educators, teens, staff from other city departments, police employees, businesses, restaurant and shop owners, graduates of the Citizens Police Academy and other training programs, Housing Authority residents, members of the Better Together Leadership Circle, elected officials and more.

This new external process showed our department that the community wanted more community policing, to see us on social media, more training for the officers, more training programs for the community and to know what we were doing. Our former internal strategic planning process would have focused on ways of dealing with crime and quality of life issues.

The manner in which the new strategic plan was implemented also changed. Every officer, communications officer and civilian staff member of our department participated in the strategic plan implementation groups working on tasks from the plan. The groups researched, prepared and presented project plans. This new process put all of our staff in the position to contribute and own the results of the plan, rather than being ordered to do something different or new with no real understanding as to why.

Community Education, Programs and Volunteers:

Our department offers numerous educational programs and hosts various seminars, classes and workshops for community members.

The *Citizen's Police Academy (CPA)* is a 10-week course of weekly evening classes to help community members understand how our officers are trained, how we work to balance problem solving with enforcing laws, the legal parameters we must operate within and how critical community partnerships are to our department. We have hosted 27 Citizens Police Academy (CPA) classes since the early 1990's. Our CPA was created in partnership with community members who wanted an opportunity to learn and ask questions about their department.

Topics/Activities Include:

- Department Functions & Staffing
- Recruitment & Training
- Criminal Law & Crime Trends
- Traffic Enforcement
- Drug Identification & Trends
- Firearms Familiarization & Safety
- Special Units & Criminal Investigations

- Use of Force
- Juvenile Procedures
- Crisis Intervention
- Community Policing
- Crime Prevention
- Patrol Ride-a-Long
- Tour of DeKalb County Medical Examiner's Office
- Tour of DeKalb County Jail

The *Citizens Assisting Public Safety (C.A.P.S.) Volunteer Program*, established in 2008, is made up of Citizen's Police Academy graduates who serve the community by assisting the police department with the many special events hosted in the city. We do not have enough officers to staff all of the events. There are currently (30) C.A.P.S. Volunteers who assist with:

- Road Race/Parade Traffic Control
- Festival & Event Patrol
- Barricade Control
- Community Walks/Programs
- Bicycle Registrations
- Crossing Guard Assistance
- Traffic Calming
- Welfare Calls
- Emergency Callouts (Ex. Missing person search, weather related emergencies)
- Monitors for promotional testing

The *Junior Police Academy (JPA)* is a week-long camp for 11-14 years old youth. The JPA is designed to educate and enlighten youth about the functions and duties of their police department and build relationships with the officers who serve their community. We began hosting the JPA one week each summer in 2010. Due to the popularity and demand, we added a second JPA session each year during the City Schools of Decatur Fall Break.

The JPA includes sessions on 911/Communications, Recruitment & Training, Weapons & Equipment, Use of Force, Traffic Safety & Enforcement, Drug Trends & Dangers, Criminal Investigations, Personal Safety & Crime Prevention and Physical Fitness. Participants also complete the Family & Friends® CPR course, complete 911 emergency call and crime scene/fingerprinting practical exercises as well as tour the City of Decatur police department and the DeKalb County Jail.

The *R.A.D. (Rape. Aggression. Defense.) Women's Self-Defense Course* is a 12-hour self-defense program. Participants learn how to be more aware, recognize potentially dangerous situations and how to defend themselves from physical aggression, attack or abduction. The class is physical but it is not difficult. The moves are simple not reliant upon fitness level or brute strength. The course provides a safe, supportive and controlled environment for participants to

learn simple techniques, retained through repetition that can be used regardless of age, size or strength. The goal is to give women options to defend themselves and get out of danger, not engage an attacker. We have had 418 women attend the course and there are currently 271 women on the waitlist. We offer the course 3-6 times per year depending on the availability of the space and instructors. While many R.A.D. programs across the country charge a fee for participants to take the course, we opted to NOT put up any additional obstacles for women wanting and needing to take the course. Alumnae of our R.A.D. program includes survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence & violent crimes, women trying to escape abusive relationships, stalking victims, trans women, high school and college students, seniors, women with physical disabilities and women with developmental/cognitive challenges.

We also host several organizations for workshops, seminars and classes such as:

- Revved Up Kids - Safety & Self-Defense Workshops for Youth/Teens and Parent Seminars
- Alzheimer's Association
- NAMI Georgia (National Alliance on Mental Illness)
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
- Georgia Cares - Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking and Exploitation
- Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities