In an effort to educate and inform the community, the City of Lebanon, in partnership with the Lebanon Police Department, provides its residents and business owners a voluntary police academy.

The city and LPD also offer a similar Youth Police Academy.

The six-week Citizen's Police Academy program entails lectures, presentations, as well as hands-on activities to teach and inform its participants the many facets of law enforcement and introduce the police department that serves them.

Police Chief Scott Bowen said this stimulating and informative program will give each enrollee a better sense of the LPD and the issues concerning everyday operations. Citizens will also have a better understanding of their role in the Community Oriented Policing philosophy.

The purpose of the Citizen's Police Academy is to foster better communications between citizens and police through education. A well-informed citizen is more likely to share their experiences with the community as the opportunity arises. Everyone benefits from enhancing citizen's understanding of the role and function of their police department, he added.

Modeled after the Citizens' Police Academy, the Youth Police Academy is a week-long program that also includes lectures, presentations and hands-on activities. It is designed to give young people a clearer understanding of police work and dispel the unrealistic world of crime-fighting portrayed in movies and on television.

"Our hope is that students attending the program develop a strong rapport with our department and learn how to become an engaged and active member of our community," Bowen said.

Although future police officers and aspiring criminal justice professionals are certainly encouraged to apply, students who have a general interest in civics, government and the community may also benefit from the varied experiences in the academy. Participants must

have an interest in the curriculum and be willing participants.

"The program is not designed for children with disciplinary problems or 'at risk' children," he emphasized. "Although we have a training camp atmosphere, we are neither designed for nor are we clinically trained to deal with troubled youth."

Anyone interested in applying is encouraged to do so by March 18. There is no cost for the academy. The Youth Police Academy will be held Monday through Friday, March 18-22. This is during week two of Lebanon Special School District's and Wilson County Schools' Spring Breaks.

Academy times are 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Details and schedules will be included in the AWP (Application and Waiver Packet). Class size is limited to 40 students. To qualify, you must:

- Be between the ages of 12 and 18 (still in school)
- Be in good academic standing with your school
- Have written consent form signed by a parent or legal guardian
- Not have been convicted of any crimes

To receive your AWP, come by the police department at 406 Tennessee Blvd., Lebanon. It can also be downloaded from www.lebanonpd.org. Deadline for the AWP is Friday, March 8.

All applications will be reviewed and approved by the Chief of Police. For further information, contact Officer PJ Hardy, CPA coordinator, at 453-4398 or by email at pjhardy@lebanontn.org.

You are also encouraged to apply for the next Citizen's Police Academy, which begins Thursday, March 21. The academy meets every Thursday from 6 p.m.-9 p.m., in the courtroom of the LPD. There is no cost to participants. Deadline to register for the academy is Friday, March 15.

To qualify, you must be:

- At least 18 years old
- A resident, business owner, employed, or volunteer within the city of Lebanon
- Without any felony convictions

To apply in person, come to the police department at 406 Tennessee Blvd., or apply online at www.lebanonpd.org. For further information, you may also contact Hardy at the same number and email listed above.